

Veritas



In this issue . . .

SOD-JF in Iraq	18
OSS Detachment 101	36
ODA 163	50



Errata Veritas 2:2

♣ In the article “Task Force 160 in Urgent Fury,” *Veritas* 2:2, it was stated that three passengers were killed when Captain Keith Lucas’ Black Hawk crashed into Amber Belair Hill. This is incorrect. The total special operations forces fatalities for Operation URGENT FURY were four Navy SEALs, eight Rangers, and CPT Lucas of TF 160. No other SOF units suffered fatalities.

♣ On page 14 of “Soldiers-Sailors in Korea: JACK Maritime Operations,” *Veritas* 2:2, the photo identified the Civil Air Transport aircraft as a C-47 Dakota. The airplane (B-902) is actually a C-46 Commando. The large cargo door on the right side of the fuselage is a key feature that distinguishes the C-46 from the C-47 with its individual paratrooper door on the left side.

C-46 Commando



C-47 Dakota



In This Issue:

In the past sixty years, ARSOF units and personnel have made history in diverse places throughout the world. Locations covered in this issue of *Veritas* are indicated on the map.

- ♣ *Helena, Montana*—The First Special Service Force was formed and trained at Fort William Henry Harrison, near Helena.
- ♣ *Burma*—In World War II, the Office of Strategic Services’ (OSS) Detachment 101 inserted teams behind the Japanese lines and were the main source of intelligence for LTG Stilwell’s Northern Combat Area Command.
- ♣ *Afghanistan*—The men of 1st Special Forces Group Operational Detachment 163 reacted to the ambush of an Afghan military convoy by al-Qaeda-associated militia.
- ♣ *Vietnam*—Psychological operations in the Vietnam War were a significant combat multiplier for American and South Vietnamese forces. The 50,000-watt radio station established at Pleiku to disseminate PSYOP products came under attack on 23 March 1968.
- ♣ *Iraq*—The Special Operations Detachment–Joint Forces from the Maryland Army National Guard provided support to Task Force Dagger during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.
- ♣ *Germany*—A product of the Cold War, Special Forces Detachment A, Berlin was tasked with a multitude of missions in the partitioned city.
- ♣ *British Isles and Tunisia*—The formation, training, and initial combat actions of the Rangers in World War II are examined in the first of a series of articles on this organization.

Veritas



3 *Reminiscences of Detachment A, Berlin*



26 *Herbert R. Brucker SF Pioneer: Part II Pre-WWII–OSS Training 1943*



64 *Rangers in World War II: Part I—The Formation and Early Days*



71 *Attack on the Pleiku Radio Station*

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 3 | Reminiscences of Detachment A, Berlin 1982–1984
<i>by Eugene G. Piasecki</i> | 50 | Everyone Can Take Pride in This Fight: ODA 163 in Afghanistan
<i>by Charles H. Briscoe</i> |
| 11 | Unique Support for a Unique Unit: The Service Battalion of the First Special Service Force
<i>by Kenneth Finlayson</i> | 64 | Rangers in World War II: Part I—The Formation and Early Days
<i>by Kenneth Finlayson and Robert W. Jones Jr.</i> |
| 18 | The SOD-JF in Iraq: A “Total Force” Success Story
<i>By Alan D. Meyer</i> | 71 | Attack on the Pleiku Radio Station
<i>by Robert W. Jones Jr.</i> |
| 26 | Herbert R. Brucker SF Pioneer: Part II Pre-WWII–OSS Training 1943
<i>by Charles H. Briscoe</i> | 76 | Books in the Field |
| 36 | The Failures of Detachment 101 and its Evolution into a Combined Arms Team
<i>By Troy J. Sacquety</i> | | |



COVER: The UH-60 Black Hawks of TF Saber were used to transport the ODA 163 QRF.

The Azimuth of the USASOC History Office

Veritas 2:3 is a spectrum issue that covers World War II [following the official lineage of Army special operations forces (ARSOF)] through current operations in OEF/OIF. The role of the USASOC historians is to provide “connective tissue” to ARSOF soldier accounts of operations, cross-reference for accuracy, and disseminate solid history throughout the Force. Feedback from active and retired soldiers, veterans, and the civilian community continues to be very positive. That is how we determine whether we are “on azimuth” with our readers. All articles have been reviewed in-house and corrected based on feedback received from the featured veterans and subject matter experts. The *Errata* section inside the front cover corrects the errors found in the previous issue. Current operations stories are approved for release by USASOC G-2 and G-3. Constructive comments are appreciated.

All Roads Lead to Baghdad: ARSOF in Iraq will be reprinted for commercial sale in the near future. It is available for purchase now from the Government Printing Office. The poster “ARSOF in Iraq” that supplements *All*

Roads Lead to Baghdad will be distributed in October 2006. *ARSOF in El Salvador, 1982–1993* will be the USASOC history published as a book in 2007. The Salvadoran military has agreed to participate in this project. A special thanks to all El Salvador veterans that came to the reunion at Fort Bragg in August 2006. They shared photos, memorabilia, and provided interviews. However, more NCO interviews are needed to “balance the book.” Current USASOC book writing projects are “ARSOF in Korea, 1950–1953,” “The History of Camp Mackall,” and “ARSOF in Somalia.”

The USASOC History Office appreciates all ARSOF veterans—from WWII–GWOT—for providing their personal accounts of events in Army SOF history. We welcome old photos, documents, and supporting memorabilia. These materials “give life” to the topics and make the articles more interesting. We do not “keep” veteran’s “treasures.” We only scan photos, copy materials, and photograph memorabilia. Army SOF history articles from the field are always welcome; please contact the editor for specifications.

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Reminiscences of Detachment A, Berlin 1982–1984

by Eugene G. Piasecki



THE signing of the unconditional surrender of the German armed forces on 7 May 1945 divided the country of Germany into four zones of occupation by American, British, French, and Russian armed forces. These zones of occupation represented the final troop dispositions. As a result, the city of Berlin was entirely surrounded by territory occupied by Soviet forces. In 1949 this became the German Democratic Republic or East Germany.

The city of Berlin was partitioned into East and West

This map depicts the Allied Occupation Zones at the end of World War II. The city of Berlin was also divided between the four Allied powers.

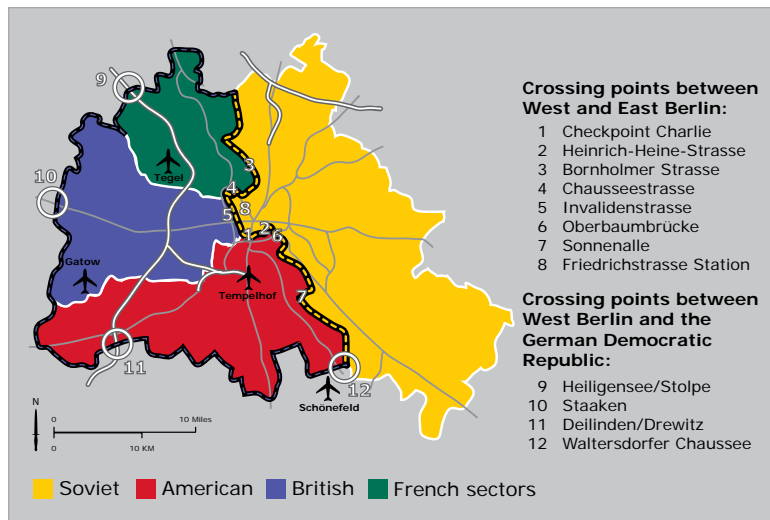


Berlin. East Berlin was solely occupied by the Soviet Union while West Berlin was divided among the United States, France, and England. Since there had been no agreement among the occupying powers concerning land and water routes into Berlin from West Germany, the Soviets took every advantage to make movements in and out of West Berlin by these means as difficult as possible. Conversely, air access had been regulated and three corridors were established from Hamburg, Hannover, and Frankfurt allowing access to the airports at Tegel (French sector), Tempelhof (American sector), and Gatow (British sector). These air corridors saved West Berlin from ruin during the Soviet blockade of the city in the winter of 1948–1949.

The final Soviet attempt to control access to Berlin occurred in 1961 when West Berlin was surrounded, first with temporary fortifications, and then by a concrete wall entirely around West Berlin. In the city, East Berlin building windows and doors that faced the western sectors were bricked-up. The only openings in the wall were two guarded crossing points at Checkpoint Charlie and Invalidenstrasse. The rationale for this action by the East Berlin government was to prevent military aggression

The devastation around Brandenburg Gate of Berlin immediately after the end of the war.





Traffic into the city of Berlin via road, rail, and air corridors was tightly controlled. Crossing from East to West Berlin and from East to West Germany took place only at designated check points.

and political interference from West Germany. This situation lasted until 9 November 1989 when private citizens took it upon themselves to begin demolishing the wall. No government interference came from either the West or the East Berlin authorities. Final sections of the Wall were removed with the assistance of the East Germans and in 1990, East and West Germany were reunited as one nation.

The purpose of this article is to present a snapshot in time that highlights the training and operations of Detachment A, Berlin Brigade. It was experienced by me during my tour as Detachment Commander. I was the last commander of this unique, multi-missioned unit.

Detachment A was formed in 1956 with six operational ODAs and a staff element. It was assigned to the 6th Infantry Regiment in Berlin. Immediately upon the outbreak of general hostilities, or under certain conditions of

localized war, the teams were to cross from West Berlin into East Germany and attack targets designated by the U.S. Commander of Berlin as vital in his fight for the city as well as priority targets established in the U.S. European Command's (USEUCOM) Unconventional Warfare Plan. Priority targets were: rail lines; rail communication systems; military headquarters; telecommunications; petroleum, oil, and lubricant facilities; storage and supply

points; and utilities and inland waterways, in that order. Upon mission completion, teams were to conduct follow-on operations as directed by the Commander, Support Operations Task Force Europe. At the end of 1961,



U.S. troops confront Soviet tanks at Checkpoint Charlie on 12–13 August 1961. The movement of Soviet armor in the vicinity of this U.S. checkpoint was a screen for the construction of the Berlin Wall.

the basic plan was unchanged, but in a revision dated 1 July 1959, the six ODAs were reorganized into five mission task groups with the actions of each more clearly defined. After completing the assigned demolition missions, the five groups would be under the control of the 10th Special Forces Group whose primary focus was Central Europe. Two of these five task groups were to be prepared to move to predesignated operational areas or to return to West Berlin for “stay behind” operations.¹ With only a few modifications based on command relationship changes and the general threat in the European Theater of Operations, this concept of operations was the basis for the Detachment's primary mission under the USEUCOM Operational Plan.

The Detachment had the secondary mission of coordinating and developing plans and conducting operations in support of the USEUCOM counter-terrorist Contingency Plan. This meant that an operator had to be proficient in unconventional warfare and special operations in an urban environment, as well as tactics, techniques, and procedures to neutralize or contain potential terrorist threats.

In the 1980s, the U.S. Army emphasis was on the sustainment and employment of heavy ground forces to fight and win land battles on the continent of Europe against the vast Soviet armies. Little to no emphasis or encouragement was given to individuals or organizations that proposed other ways to make contributions to the total Army effort. Such was the situation with the U.S. Army Special Forces. Officers who volunteered for Special Forces were frankly told that whatever career success they had enjoyed was over and that the Regular Army didn't want them back in its ranks when their tour with SF was over. They had been “ruined” for any other type of duty. Likewise, many of the personnel who were afforded the opportunity for SF duty were those whose respective branch did not want them for developmental assignments. Fortunately, some talented officers volunteered, became SF qualified and made significant contributions not only to Special Forces, but to the Regu-



6th Infantry Regiment Distinctive Unit Insignia.



Checkpoint Charlie in a photo taken in 1984 at the time of the author's tour with Detachment A. The shot is looking into East Berlin from the American sector.



On 26 June 1963, President John F. Kennedy and West Berlin's Mayor Willy Brandt visited Checkpoint Charlie. During his visit to the city, Kennedy made his famous declaration: "Ich bin ein Berliner. [I am a Berliner.]"

lar Army as well.

While attending the Infantry Officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1980, I was notified that I had been accepted for SF training. Upon successful completion of the Special Forces Qualification Course, I was to report to the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, California, for thirty-two weeks of basic German language training. In early April 1982, my fellow Q-course classmates at Monterey began receiving assignment instructions to the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, located at Bad Toelz, Federal Republic of Germany. With DLI graduation two weeks away, I finally received my assignment to Detachment A, Berlin Brigade. Having no idea what this unit was, I began asking questions. No one at DLI could shed any light on Detachment A. One week later, I received a welcome letter from my sponsor, Captain Dennis Warriner, with instructions to bring all military uniforms and relax my grooming standards. He further explained that he could not say anything more about the unit except it had a classified mission. I would be met at the airport by the unit executive officer since Warriner would not be present in Berlin on the day I arrived.

With family in tow, I arrived in Berlin on Sunday, 6 June 1982, and was met at Tegel Airport by Major Kevin McGooley, the unit executive officer. My first impression was the number of heavily armed German Police patrolling the airport with submachine guns. I was told that this was to counter terrorist threats from elements of the Red Army Brigade, the active anti-American faction centered in the West Berlin Free University. The Red Army Brigade occasionally conducted anti-U.S. demonstrations. Many faction members were young men who fled West Germany's *Bundeswehr* (Army) draft. I was assured that we would be safe since we would be living in government quarters with other U.S. soldiers and their families. The area was referred to as the "American Ghetto."

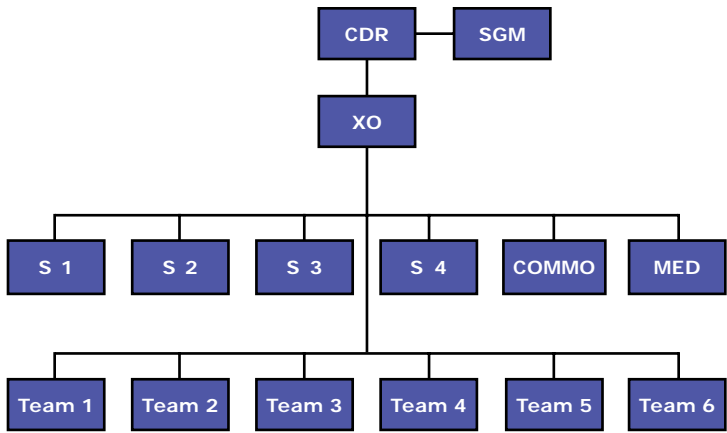
The following morning I wore civilian clothes to the unit to begin in-processing at Detachment A. The old adage of "first impressions are lasting" could have never

been more true. Upon arriving at Andrews Barracks in the Lichterfelde District of West Berlin, I was escorted to Section 2, Building 904. After entering through cipher-locked doors, I was greeted by the stares of several loosely groomed individuals in German civilian clothes. No introductions were made. This was normal. In-processing began in the S-1. At 1000 hours, I reported to the Detachment A Commander, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Darrell W. Katz. LTC Katz briefly explained that this was an all-volunteer unit. I would become an ODA commander in approximately thirty days. If I didn't want to be assigned now or any time later, all I had to do was to tell him. He would arrange a reassignment.

After assuring him that I wanted to stay, I finished my in-processing. Then I tried to learn as much as possible about the organization, its standing operating procedures, and its missions. Detachment A was organized somewhat like a standard SF battalion except it was company sized and supported six ODAs.

Each staff section (called the Forward Control or FC) was headed by a senior non-commissioned officer (NCO), except Operations which had a captain who had already commanded an ODA in the unit. The NCOs

Organizational Chart of Detachment A, Berlin at the time of the author's assignment to the unit.



were all highly experienced, qualified SF soldiers who could accomplish a multitude of tasks. Regardless of the request, they provided a solution to facilitate mission accomplishment. Fortunately, these section chiefs provided unit personnel “hip-pocket” instructions based on their knowledge and experience. This reduced the learning curve for “newbies.”

After being briefed, I was able to read Operations Plan (OPLAN) 4304, the USEUCOM General War Plan and Contingency Plan (CONPLAN) 0300—the military counter-terrorist option within the USEUCOM area of responsibility. Included in OPLAN 4304 was the dependent evacuation plan in the event of general war. While we trained to execute the USEUCOM OPLAN 4304 and the CT CONPLAN, the dependent evacuation plan was rarely discussed and never exercised.

On 1 July 1982, LTC Katz assigned me to command Team One. This detachment had a bad reputation. They lacked the discipline necessary to accomplish assigned missions. I learned that my team sergeant would be a master sergeant presently assigned to the S-2 office. All this brought reality into sharp focus. This was my first SF assignment after the qualification course and the team sergeant had not previously worked with this team. Fortunately, the new team sergeant had been in the unit for some time, had good rapport with the Det A sergeant major and knew the team and its personalities. Needless to say, we introduced ourselves and immediately discussed what needed to be done to turn Team One around.

We began with several days at the firing range. This had a two-fold purpose: training me in Close Quarter Battle firing techniques for the counter-terrorism mission and enabling the new team sergeant and me to observe and evaluate each team member’s skill during stressful situations. It also allowed the team to teach me and become familiar with their new team leader. This give-and-take experience quickly paid dividends. Individuals started identifying as a part of a team and a “team personality” evolved.

In early August 1982, LTC Katz told me that I was to be the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of Det A personnel supporting U.S. Army VII Corps in Return of Forces to Germany (REFORGER) exercise CARBINE FORTRESS. It would be the first time that elements of Det A had participated in REFORGER. The Det A contingent consisted of Teams One and Five, selected radio operators, a master sergeant from the S-3 (operations section), and the Detachment communications van with three radio operators. Teams One and Five members were divided into three-man cells with one radio operator per cell and assigned sectors in the exercise area. We established a mini-forward operating base on the U.S. Army installation at Illesheim, Germany, using the communications van and operations section. The Det A mission was to collect human intelligence (HUMINT) for the VII Corps Intelligence Section (G-2).

The exercise was progressing smoothly until mid-

September, when one of the HUMINT cells was compromised and the members arrested by the German police. They were suspected of being terrorists. A local *Gasthaus* (hotel) owner had overheard a conversation about “snatching a German Army general.” This led to their arrest. At the police station, I presented our credentials and they were verified by the VII Corps G-2. Instead of being released, the men spent the night in jail. The next morning, the VII Corps G-2 HUMINT officer and I reported to REFORGER headquarters. A Canadian brigadier general and an American major general were waiting. The Canadian general’s first comment was: “Who the hell are you and where the hell are you from?” I responded. He cleared the room of everyone except the American general, the VII Corps HUMINT officer, and me. After a ten-minute, one-sided, “Do you understand what has happened here?” conversation, I was told to send this cell back to Berlin. No response was necessary. We saluted and left posthaste. I assured the generals that it would be done as soon as possible. After I got them out of jail, the men were sent to Frankfurt where they boarded the Frankfurt–Berlin Duty Train the same day. We continued our mission.

I met with each of the remaining operational cells, explained the situation, and “cautioned them” about personal behavior during the exercise. All went well afterward. Typical of Special Forces, the men nicknamed the unlucky cell leader “Agent Orange.” And, the label stuck.

Overall, REFORGER 1982 was a very successful exercise. Lieutenant General William J. Livsey, Commander, VII Corps, lauded the Detachment performance as the “only HUMINT source that prepared the Corps to meet any potential aggressor force actions.”² It was an invaluable experience to operate with conventional forces. Det A demonstrated that Special Forces were truly a force multiplier. Furthermore, the missions provided training and experience in support of our OPLAN 4304 wartime mission. The success of 1982 insured participation in REFORGER 1983.

We redeployed to Berlin in late September 1982 on the Duty Train. It ran daily leaving Berlin and Frankfurt at 1900 hours. The train was available to all military personnel assigned to Berlin, as well as dependents and guests. All that was required to ride was a reservation, a valid military identification card or passport, and a set of “Flag Orders.” Flag Orders, signed by the Commandant of Berlin, authorized travel on the Duty Train for members of the Allied garrison.

All passenger compartments had four bunks with communal lavatories at each end of the car. No alcoholic beverages were allowed on the train and the cars were patrolled by American Military Police. The train stopped at the border of West Berlin and East Germany and again at the border of East and West Germany to verify that the passengers listed on the train manifest were aboard and to ensure no one tried to exfiltrate or infiltrate illegally. There was also an additional train to Bremerhaven

ACP
1983 APR 29 15:45
HELMSTEDT

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE
СОЕДИНЕННЫЕ ШТАТЫ АМЕРИКИ

MOVEMENT ORDERS
LAISSEZ-PASSER
ПУТЕВКА

Name
Nom, Prénom
Фамилия, Имя

Rank
Grade
Чин

Nationality
Nationalité
Гражданство

Identify Document No.
Place d'identité No.
№ удостоверения личности

PIASECKI EUGENE G CPT American

is / are authorized to travel from
est / sont autorisé(s) à se rendre de
уполномочен(ы) совершить из

Berlin to Helmstedt и обратно

by train or by vehicle No.
par le train ou par voiture No.
поездом или на автомобиле №

RH-2248

from (date)
du (date)
из (числа)

26 Apr 83

to (date)
au (date)
на (числа)

5 May 83

inclusive
inclus
включительно

by
par

The United States Commander, Berlin
Le Commandant Américain à Berlin
Американский Командант в Берлине

Signature
Signature

MG US ARMY
US COMMANDANT

Date
Date
Число

26 Apr 83

HEADQUARTERS
US ARMY BERLIN

KRIEHL Houssee
29 APR 1983
- BBE3A -

Flag orders signed by the U.S. Commandant of Berlin. These orders were required in order to travel to Berlin via the Duty Train.

to ship and receive private automobiles from the United States. The same manifest checks were done for this train. The Military Police specifically monitored Det A members more closely than the other passengers.

After returning to Berlin, I discovered that my team sergeant had been replaced by Master Sergeant Howard Fedor, formerly on Team Three. He had served in the unit for six years and had a wealth of SF and Berlin experience. After our initial meeting, we decided to focus more on our area of operation in West Berlin. Each of the six ODAs was assigned two or three districts of Berlin without regard to which Western ally controlled them. Sector information was strictly limited to the specific team assignments. These assignments were made based on respective missions in support of OPLAN 4304. Team One had the Neukölln and Kreuzberg sectors. Of all the sectors in Berlin, these were probably the most diverse. Kreuzberg was the home of the “squatters,” young men living in dilapidated, condemned buildings to avoid the *Bundeswehr* draft. Neukölln was predominantly inhabited by Turks, and Treptow had mainly single-family residences. The common denominator for them was their eastern boundary—the Berlin Wall.

Although each section could be accessed by automobile, the preferred method of travel was by subway. U.S.-

licensed automobiles drew considerable attention from the residents. Before every entry, each team member received five Deutsche Marks (DM5) for spending and two subway passes, to ride in and out. Everything else that person did while in that section was at his own expense. However, if mission-related items of equipment were purchased—such as miniature cameras, film, or maps—the team member could be reimbursed from the Detachment Operations and Training Fund as long as he had a receipt.

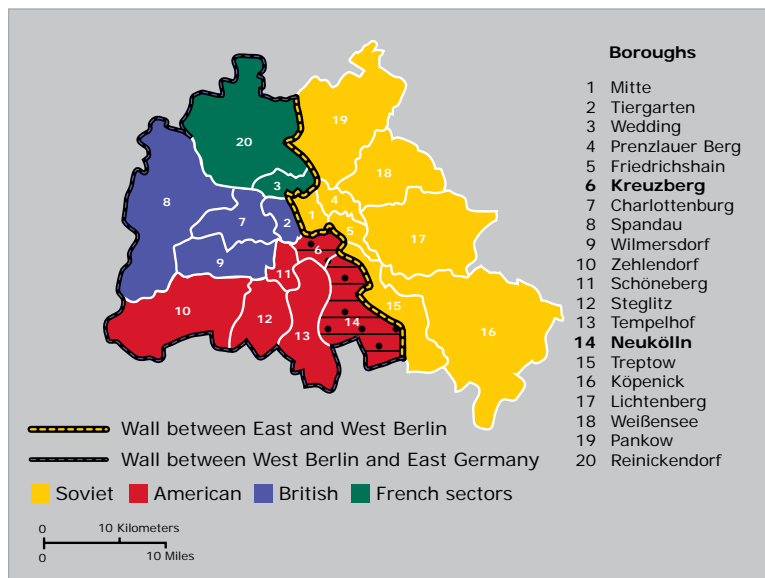
Internally, we went as “buddy teams” to different locations in the team sector to collect information for our area study/assessment. Every other day we assembled in the team room to update maps and sector folders with the latest data. This was done until February 1983, before the annual ski training.

Ski training was an annual February event held in Federal Republic of Germany. One half of the unit would go to Garmisch-Partenkirchen to ski for ten days and then the other half would go. An airborne operation with in-flight parachute rigging was part of the infiltration. It was a welcome break from the daily activities in Berlin.

In March 1983, twelve members of Detachment A were selected to receive additional “specialized training.” We assembled in a unit classroom to be briefed. A distinguished visitor, William F. Casey, then Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, explained that we were selected to receive advanced training with his organization. This training would be done incrementally over time. The “specialized” training lasted until December 1983. The last session was conducted in Munich, Germany.

We received our instruction from current and retired operatives in the Paramilitary Branch. The hands-on training was quite interesting and beneficial. We shared this with our teams. Some aspects of the experience

This map shows the occupation zones within the city of Berlin and the boundaries of the various boroughs within the city. The Berlin Wall is shown as the prominent yellow line. The Team 1 sectors were #6 and #14.



were funny. Our language and cultural skills were better than the operatives. None of the trainers spoke any German. One day they became lost in the city and called to ask for directions. When asked to pinpoint themselves with street signs, their reply was: "We're at the corner of *Umleitung* and *Einbahnstrasse*." None of us could help them because they were reading signs for a detour on a one-way street. Eventually, they found their way back to the Detachment.

In July 1983, Team One attended Special Operations Training (SOT) at the Mott Lake facility on Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This provided another opportunity. Teams typically going to SOT would fly commercially from and to Berlin. This was not the case for Team One. We were chosen to make the first long-range infiltration from Berlin to Fort Bragg. On 5 July 1983, we boarded the Duty Train to Frankfurt. From the Frankfurt train station we were taken to Rhein-Main Air Force Base. That evening we boarded a U.S. Air Force MC-130 aircraft to the United States. After a long, uncomfortable night and three mid-air refuelings, we began in-flight parachute rigging. At 1100 hours on 7 July 1983, we jumped on St. Mere-Eglise Drop Zone at Fort Bragg and were trucked to Mott Lake for training. The training at Mott Lake honed our CT skills and demonstrated our competence as a cohesive, well-trained force. After CONUS leaves, the team returned to Berlin in August 1983.

During our absence, LTC Katz placed more emphasis on our OPLAN missions. He used the 10th Special Forces Group, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, Combined Area Studies Mission Analysis Program (CASMAP) to do this. CASMAP focused each team's efforts and its missions by requiring exceptionally in-depth studies of assigned areas of operation. Though team assignments and missions had previously been closely guarded, once CASMAP began, strict compartmentalization became an obsession.

When a team was assembling information, it posted a "CASMAP PREP" sign on its team room door. The unwritten rule was that only team members could enter. In October 1983, the commander and sergeant major scheduled team brief-backs to assess knowledge and effort to date on areas of operation. CASMAP provided the directional and organizational guidelines needed to address all aspects of team area studies.

Since Team One was a "stay-behind" team, the S-2 arranged for "Ring" and "Wall" Flights. The U.S. Army Flight Detachment, Berlin, flew these fixed-wing and helicopter missions. Ring Flights were routinely flown by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, U.S. Commander of Berlin (ODCSI-USCOB) and involved flying a twenty kilometer circle around the city of Berlin. This flight originated at Tempelhof Military Airport and flew over the Russian and East German military installations located in the City of East Berlin. It afforded the observer a "birds-eye" view of the opposition to note any changes in unit equipment and disposition.

Wall Flights also originated at Tempelhof and were



The Pilatus/Fairchild PC6-B2/H2, commonly known as the "Porter," was flown on "Ring Flight" missions over East Berlin by the Berlin Flight Detachment. The Ring Flight supported the Berlin Brigade's intelligence collection mission.

flown in a UH-1H "Huey" helicopter along the entire length of the Wall separating West Berlin from both East Berlin and East Germany. The construction of the Wall could be surveyed. Surrounding areas and possible access points were identified. It became apparent that the Wall would be a formidable obstacle to breach. Elaborate efforts had been undertaken to prevent entrance or escape. While team members updated and refined the Team CASMAP efforts, Team One was chosen to participate in Det A's final mission.

The early November 1983 mission was to support the Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed FLINTLOCK 1984, Exercise FLEET DEER. At the same time, everyone was told that Det A was to be inactivated by December 1984. FLEET DEER was designed to evaluate escape and evasion (E&E) routes and procedures for the rescue of downed pilots or other friendly personnel seeking to return to Allied control. Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) in Stuttgart, Germany, dispatched operational cells to find and survey contact points and to re-establish contact with locals who had originally assisted in establishing the E&E net. That done, the team returned to Berlin in December 1983 to revise and improve contact point target folders, assemble maps and refine operational cell procedures.

During this FLEET DEER preparation time, LTC Katz and Sergeant Major Terry Swofford were reassigned. Major Terry A. Griswold had assumed command of Det A with Master Sergeant Gil Turcotte as the sergeant major. Brigadier General Leroy N. Suddath Jr., Commander of the Berlin Brigade, was slated to command the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg that summer. Suddath had no previous special operations experience, so Griswold arranged a pre-FLEET DEER mission brief. As the officer in charge of the E&E net, I provided a very basic mission brief. We answered his questions and he appreciated the briefing. During FLEET DEER, Griswold arranged for him to ride the aircraft during the airborne insertions of 10th Special Forces Group teams into Germany from England. Sud-



Wall photo taken at the time of the author's tour with Detachment A.

dath also visited Stuttgart and received an operational briefing on FLINTLOCK 1984 from the SOCEUR staff.

The exercise was quite successful for Team One and served not only to validate the E&E net, but helped team members with their CASMAP preparations. After FLINTLOCK 1984 Det A's operational function was terminated. This triggered the stand down of the Detachment.

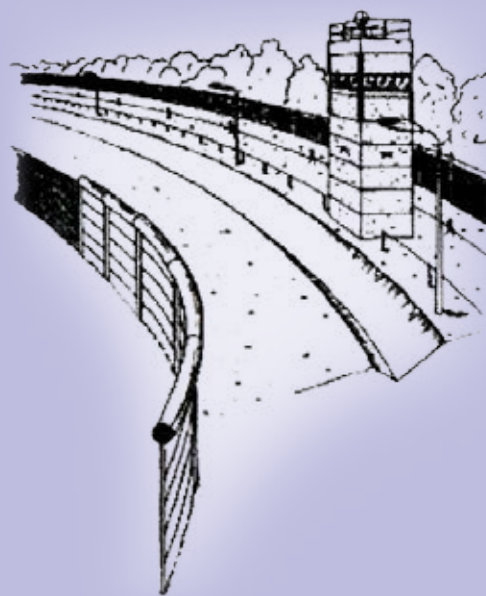
Unit inactivations can be extremely difficult or relatively easy. Success hinges on a thorough plan. In this respect, the Detachment was fortunate. Griswold, Turcotte, and the staff maximized the time available while minimizing the stress in each task. Staff NCOs used personal initiative at every opportunity. The two areas of most concern were individual reassignments and disposition of unit equipment. Griswold and Master Sergeant LeRoy F. Miller, the S-1 NCOIC, had an SF assignment person from Fort Bragg come to the Detachment to discuss every reassignment. Each SF soldier received an assignment beneficial to his respective career field. Master Sergeant Ed Cox, the NCO in charge of unit supply accounted for, transferred, and turned in all Army and non-standard clothing and equipment. The only Report of Survey was for four U.S. Army lensatic compasses. All Federal Republic of Germany operational funds were closed with the Berlin Brigade Finance Office.

Reassignment meant that many Det A soldiers would return to standard SF units. To prepare them, Griswold and Turcotte devised a military stakes course. This insured that the men were highly fit and could perform Skill Qualification Test tasks. Each team negotiated the course together and could not begin a station task until all team members were present. Teams were timed. The fastest received awards. It was well received. Griswold and Turcotte also organized a "jump fest" parachute badge exchange with the German Airborne at Braunschweig, Germany.³

When Griswold left Berlin on 8 December 1984, I was the last commander of ten men. Master Sergeant Glen Watson became the sergeant major. Those final "clearing out" days were spent turning in station property,

Wall Statistics

Total wall length	155 km
<i>East Berlin</i>	<i>43.1 km</i>
<i>German Democratic Republic</i>	<i>111.9 km</i>
Concrete slab wall, 3.5 meters high, called the anterior wall	106 km
Wire mesh fencing 3–4 meters high	67 km
Anti-tank emplacements, up to 5 meters deep	0.9 km
Anti-vehicle trench	105 km
Contact fence, called the posterior wall	127 km
Column track, 6–7 meters wide	124 km
Number of sentry towers	302
Number of bunkers	20



Overall, many more than 5,000 persons, so-called Wall breakers, succeeded in passing through the barrier; over 3,200 were arrested while attempting to escape and, as a rule, they were sentenced to several years in prison.

More than 100 people were killed attempting to cross the Wall. Over 200 were wounded. Because extreme secrecy was maintained in the German Democratic Republic regarding such matters, research on exact figures cannot be done.¹

¹ Data and figure from www.berlin.de/rbm-skzl/mauer/english/figures.htm

“sanitizing” (clearing of classified material) team and equipment rooms, and cleaning. The S-2 NCOIC, Master Sergeant Lawrence W. Coleman, checked each room for classified materials.

We were a group of very long-faced soldiers not only because we had to close the Detachment, but also because we realized that we would probably never have an experience like this again. On 16 December 1984, I gave the Chief of Staff of the Berlin Brigade the final situation report from Detachment A. He was pleased that everything had progressed well and thanked all of us for the effort. In parting, he asked me how it felt to be the last commander of Detachment A. I replied: “Sir, with all due respect, I wish it hadn’t been me.” Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, I reported to the ODCSI-USCOB for duty until my departure from West Berlin in April 1985.

The locking of the doors in Detachment A on 17 December 1984 marked the end of a one-of-a-kind unit. From inception to inactivation, Detachment A was always considered a force multiplier. The Soviet Military Liaison Mission’s daily checks revealed how important the Special Forces was to the Soviets. It will probably never be known what impact Detachment A had on Soviet war plans for Berlin. For those fortunate enough to have served in Detachment A, Berlin, it will always be an unforgettable chapter in our lives.



Detachment A, Berlin coin.



Berlin Garrison shoulder patch.

POST SCRIPT

As with all experiences, the passage of time brings reflection and recollections. Here are a few observations on the mission and the unit:

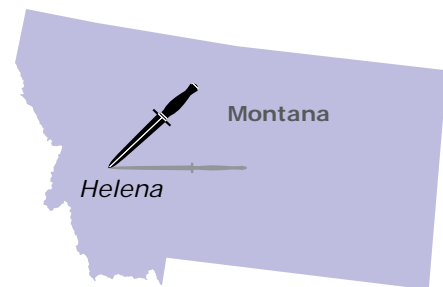
- ♣ Survivability of Detachment members in a general European war scenario was questionable. Despite relaxed grooming standards and civilian attire, inadequate documentation to pass cursory enemy checks endangered every operator.
- ♣ Not knowing where pre-positioned caches were located did not support an unconventional warfare effort by stay-behind teams.
- ♣ Dependent evacuation in the event of hostilities was never adequately addressed nor planned.
- ♣ Assignment of young SF soldiers lacking the maturity to blend into the environment brought negative attention to the Detachment.
- ♣ Command and control relationships in the event of war were unclear to the SF operators.
- ♣ Officers should not be assigned to units like Detachment A as their first SF assignment following the SF Qualification Course. Captains who have previously been team leaders and who have demonstrated their maturity should be carefully screened for a sensitive assignment like this. ♣

Thanks to Sergeant Major (Retired) Gil Turcotte, Don Cox, Colonel (Retired) Darrell W. Katz, and Bruce H. Siemon who provided invaluable information and insight to this article.

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Unique Support for a Unique Unit:

The Service Battalion of the First Special Service Force

by Kenneth Finlayson

“ONE of a kind,” is a term that applies to many aspects of the First Special Service Force (FSSF), the “Black Devils” of World War II. Composed of Canadian and American soldiers, led by officers and non-commissioned officers from both nations, the Force was organized, trained, and employed as an elite infantry unit which saw action in the Aleutians, Italy, and Southern France. Disbanded on 5 December 1944, the FSSF became, in the U.S. Army’s official lineage, the unit from which today’s Special Forces groups are constituted. In the unit’s organization, equipment, and mission, the FSSF was unique among the Allied units of World War II.

The FSSF grew out of Operation PLOUGH, the brainchild of an eccentric Englishman, Geoffrey Pyke. A civilian serving on the staff of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Chief

Englishman Geoffrey Pyke was the master-mind behind the Plough Project that resulted in the formation of the First Special Service Force.



of Combined Operations, Pyke envisioned a unit specifically designed to conduct winter combat operations in Norway, a country under German occupation since 1940.

If there were to be landed by parachute men with machines able to travel fast and far not through but on the snow, over and down the slopes of Norwegian mountains, able to carry arms for attacking and explosives to destroy bridges, tunnels, railway tracks, hydro-electric stations, etc., etc., equipped to maintain themselves in any part of the country, however high and desolate, to launch frequent attacks on vital objects simultaneously or in

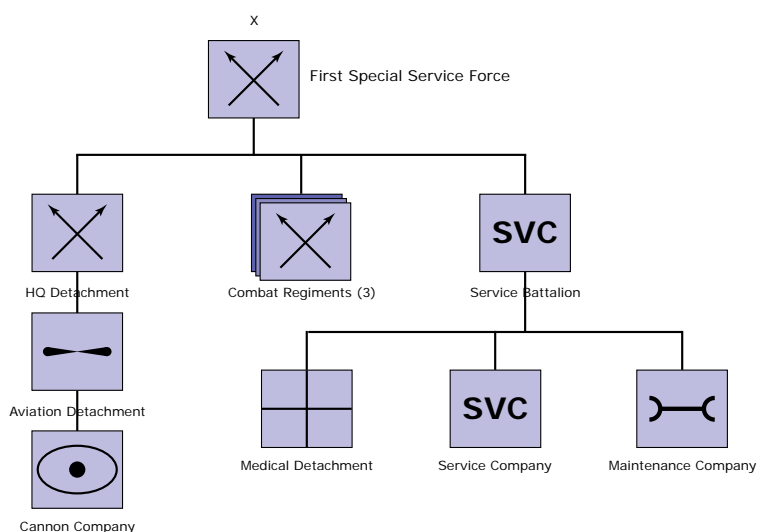


First Special Service Force shoulder patch.

quick succession . . . the Germans (would be compelled) to put into Norway more men than they have now.¹

In Pyke’s estimation, a military force of 4,000 men would cause the Germans to commit half a million troops to occupation duty; troops that might be diverted from the coastal defenses of Europe. Operation PLOUGH centered on two elements: the development of a vehicle to traverse the snow-covered landscape of Norway and the formation and training of a unit to conduct raids and sabotage missions. Endorsed by Mountbatten and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, General George C. Marshall, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, had a feasibility study done on the proposed operation. Lieutenant Colonel Robert T. Frederick, a staff officer in the Army General Staff G-3 Operations section, reviewed Pyke’s proposal and found PLOUGH to be deficient in several critical areas: first, the delivery means

for the vehicles; second, the evacuation scheme for the troops after infiltration; and third, the general premise



FSSF Organization Chart.



Men of the FSSF in the T-24 Weasel moving out of an area under mortar bombardment. Scene is from combat operations near the Rapido River in Italy, 23 January 1944.

that it would force the Germans to increase the number of occupation forces.²

Despite Frederick's negative response, the operational concept, the political pressure, and the U.S. commitment to develop a cross-country snow vehicle caused the U.S. Army to adopt the concept and move ahead. Ironically, the Chief of War Plans, Major General Dwight D. Eisenhower, selected Frederick to take charge of Operation PLOUGH because he was the man most familiar with the project. Frederick was given *carte blanche* to organize and train the unit.³

Many of the unique aspects of the organization and

Brigadier General Robert T. Frederick designed and led the FSSF until 23 June 1944, when he was selected to command the 1st Airborne Task Force. Here he is shown with Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Moore, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment, during combat near Ceretto Alto, Anzio, Italy.



training of the First Special Service Force, as Frederick named the unit that was born to support PLOUGH, resulted from the extreme time pressure associated with the operation. The Studebaker Corporation was developing an over-the-snow vehicle labeled the T-24 and nicknamed the "Weasel." They were to field the first prototype in late June 1942. Frederick needed to assemble and begin training his unit by late July of that year. He selected Fort William Henry Harrison outside of Helena, Montana, as the training site and quickly assembled a staff to begin the recruitment process. Frederick developed the first Table of Organization (today's Table

of Organization and Equipment) for the FSSF, in which he established a separate Service Battalion to support the three combat regiments. This was a distinct departure from the standard organizational template for the infantry units (that traditionally placed support troops in the combat battalions). In the Force, the combat elements focused on training exclusively—with no requirements to fill work details, conduct maintenance, or perform administrative duties. In the FSSF, the service battalion handled all activities not directly connected to training.

In the view of Colonel Robert W. Moore, who rose to command the 2nd Regiment, "The Service Battalion was a great asset for us. The troops could concentrate 100 percent of the time on training with no distractions."⁴ Within the Service Battalion were the cooks, bakers, administra-

Major Gerald Rodehaver commanded the Service Battalion. His "Rhythm Rascals" were a fondly remembered part of the training at Fort Harrison, Montana.





A representative from the Studebaker Corporation gives maintenance instruction to American and Canadian Service Battalion personnel on the T-24 Weasel.

tive and maintenance personnel, parachute riggers (the Force was an airborne unit), armorers, and a full medical section with doctors, dentists, and aidmen. A Military Police platoon, carpenters, draftsmen, electricians, mail clerks, stenographers, and photographers were all included in the Table of Organization of the Service Battalion.⁵ Like the Force itself, the Service Battalion was a self-contained organization that proved its value in the hills outside of Helena.

The Service Battalion was composed of three companies—the Headquarters Company, the Maintenance Company, and the Service Company—as well as an Ordnance and Communications Detachment. A separate Aviation Detachment was on hand to provide transport for parachute operations and conduct reconnaissance and liaison flights as needed. The original Table of Organization called for 30 officers and 600 enlisted men in the Service Battalion.⁶ The first commander of the Service Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel James B. Conyers, arrived in Helena in July 1942. An artillery officer near the age of retirement, Conyers returned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, after two weeks and was replaced by Major Gerald E. Rodehaver from the Missouri National Guard.⁷ The industrious if somewhat eccentric Rodehaver was a particular favorite with the troops. During training in Fort Harrison, his unofficial musical ensemble, “Rodehaver’s Rhythm Rascals,” serenaded the Forcemen at reveille and at Force formations.⁸ Under his command, the men of the Service Battalion supported the training of the three Force regiments as well as training themselves.

The mission of the Force dictated a wide-ranging training regime that focused intensively on infantry skills, weapons and demolitions, mountaineering and skiing, as well as arduous physical training and road marches. In the combat units, the men were parachute qualified in an abbreviated airborne training program run at Fort Harrison. Within the Service Battalion, only the parachute riggers did airborne training, but all troops took part in the forced marches and the hand-to-



Motion picture photographer Bernie Kassoy was a member of the Photo Detachment of the FSSF. Filming Force training was a significant mission.

hand training as well as completing an infantry obstacle course that included crawling under machinegun fire amidst exploding dynamite sticks.⁹ While the men of the Service Battalion were trained to a high level in infantry skills, their primary responsibility was to support the combat troops.

Private Tom Hope, drafted in 1942 into the Army Signal Corps, was assigned to the FSSF as a motion picture photographer in the Photographic Detachment. The detachment’s mission was to record the training of the unit. Hope arrived in Helena accompanied by still photographer Private Lew Merriam.¹⁰ “We picked up men like Frank Lehman, Ed Gielow, Ray Short, and Bernie Kassoy. The officer was a Lieutenant Ferris P. Copper. They gave us a little building that we made into a darkroom and a place to store film with a little room so the officers had a place to review the training films.”¹¹ The Photographic Detachment also showed Army training films to the soldiers as part of the training program. In the evenings, the photographers ran the latest feature movies out of Holly-

The men of the Photo Detachment at Fort Harrison (left to right): Irwin Cinatl, Frank Lenon, Edward Gielow, Lewis Merriam, Burton Willenzien, Ollie Stripling, and Tom Hope. Missing: Bernie Kassoy (probably taking the picture).





Parachute training was conducted in Helena for the combat echelons of the Force. Improved parachute landing fall techniques pioneered through the work of the Photo Detachment significantly reduced jump injuries.

wood. They were in the field regularly filming the training of the Force. Their film records supported a change in parachute landing fall techniques by the Army.

The FSSF conducted parachute training for all members of the combat echelon at Fort Harrison. Canadian Sergeant Bill Story of 5th Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment described the original technique of the parachute-landing fall: "Paratroopers came in from Fort Benning [Georgia], many that had been with the original test platoon. They taught us to land with our feet apart and stressed we shouldn't reach for the ground with one foot or the other in what they called pedaling."¹² This

technique resulted in a very high incidence of leg injuries. Nearly one jumper in four sustained a broken leg or ankle. Private Tom Hope and his two-man crew filmed the jump training in an attempt to determine the causes behind the high injury rate.

I had a Bell and Howell 70 DA camera, a little magazine camera that would run at sixty-four frames per second, which is good for slow-motion photography. I remember having to run all over the drop zone to catch the groups as they landed. I was in the best condition of my life, like running a 100-yard dash every few minutes. We shot a lot of film and the lieutenant took it on a train to Chicago to get it developed. When he returned, the jump officer and a whole bunch of others crowded into our little building to review the film. You could see that even in a good landing, one foot would touch slightly ahead of the other which put all the stress on that leg. The jump officer decided to try a jump with the feet together, and when they did, the injuries went way down. We shot the guys landing with feet together and made a training film of it. I was later told that both [Forts] Benning and Bragg adopted that system and it became SOP [standing operating procedures] for the U.S. Army, then the Canadians.¹³

In an abbreviated version of the Army's standard six-week course at Fort Benning, the Force qualified men as parachutists in as little as three days. First Lieutenant Edward Thomas, later the Executive Officer for 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment, recalled the training: "One of my surprises was just how very little jump training was being done at [Fort] Harrison; I was amazed because it was so different from what I'd been through. Two jumps for qualification instead of the five or six required in the parachute school at Benning, and no night jumps."¹⁴

The FSSF Air Detachment, another unique organic element, supported the parachute training. The mission of the FSSF Air Detachment was to provide aviation support for airborne operations, aerial reconnaissance in support of Force training, and transportation of personnel and equipment. One of the members of the Air Detachment, Second Lieutenant Ray Cart, recalled, "My association with the Air Detachment began on 15 September 1942 when War Department Special Order #250 assigned Second Lieutenants Jean Daly, Eben S. Lapworth, Orville B. Verdery, and myself to the First Special

The Douglas C-47 "Skytrain" was the primary cargo and parachute training aircraft in the FSSF. Sometimes referred to as the "Dakota," the two C-47s were based at the Helena Municipal Airport with the rest of the Aviation Detachment.



The Cessna C-78 "Bobcat" five-passenger aircraft was used for carrying personnel and light cargo in support of FSSF training and operations.



Service Force. At that time we were assigned to the 56th Fighter Group at Mitchell Field in New Jersey and we set out in Jean Daly's car, arriving seven or eight days later in Helena."¹⁵

After reporting in at Fort Harrison, the group was directed to the Helena Municipal Airport where the Air Detachment was headquartered. There they joined Captain James W. Bennett, the detachment commander, and three other pilots, Second Lieutenants Charles Raus, Charles B. Rimmer, and Ernest Kelly. First Lieutenant Richard V. Brittain, who was not a pilot, served as the detachment supply officer. Nineteen enlisted mechanics, radio operators, and aircraft crewmen made up rest of the detachment.¹⁶ These men flew and maintained the aircraft in the Air Detachment.

In the Force Table of Equipment, the Air Detachment was authorized six airplanes: "Ln and obsvn [liaison and observation] in accordance with missions assigned the Force."¹⁷ The Air Detachment fleet actually had seven: two C-47 "Skytrains" to support parachute operations and haul cargo, two Cessna C-78 "Bobcats" (five-passenger aircraft for carrying personnel and light cargo), and two Stinson L-9B "Voyagers" (a light reconnaissance aircraft).¹⁸ A Fairchild C-86 "Forwarder" reconnaissance aircraft was also added to the six authorized by the Table of Equipment.¹⁹ The crews flew a variety of missions in support of the training program and the pilots, holding several ratings, garnered considerable flying experience in the mountainous terrain around Helena.

On one occasion, the Governor of Montana, Sam C. Ford, requested that the FSSF Aviation Detachment support a state-run rescue effort to free miners trapped during a mine accident. The Aviation Detachment flew from Helena to Billings, picked up the rescue teams, and then ferried them to the accident site near Butte. In the end, the teams failed to rescue the trapped miners, but the presence of the Force aircraft demonstrated the close relationship that the unit had established with the people of the state.²⁰

The high volume of flying in the rugged Montana terrain ultimately cost lives. On 21 December 1942, pilot First Lieutenant Orville Verdery and Second Lieutenant Leo B. Mansfield of the First Regiment took off in the evening on a reconnaissance flight. Their Stinson L-9B did not return on schedule, and early the next morning

The Fairchild C-86 "Forwarder" provided short take-off/landing capability and was used for observation and reconnaissance.

The Stinson L-9B "Voyager" was a light reconnaissance aircraft. One of Aviation Detachment's two L-9s crashed into the mountains near Helena.



Service Battalion personnel man a field kitchen in the mountains of Italy. The round containers were used to transport hot food to the troops on the front lines. They were the predecessors to "Mermite" cans.



A FSSF Service Battalion 6x6 truck unloads from an LST (Landing Ship-Tank) at the Anzio beachhead.

an aerial search was launched. Lieutenants Ray Cart and Eben Lapworth found the wreckage of the Stinson on the side of a mountain outside Fort Harrison. Verdery and Mansfield were the only training fatalities suffered by the Force.²¹ Shortly afterward, the Force departed Fort Harrison for amphibious training at Camp Bradford, near Norfolk, Virginia, in January 1943.

The Aviation Detachment, minus the lost Stinson aircraft, followed the Force to Virginia and established operations at Langley Field. When the Force later moved to Fort Ethan Allan, Vermont, for further training in mountain warfare, the detachment conducted operations from the municipal airport in nearby Burlington. The mission of the Aviation Detachment remained unchanged, but shortly after its arrival in Burlington, the crews were ordered to prepare the aircraft and equipment for movement overseas.²² However, when the Force was ordered to move to the West Coast to participate in the Aleutian Campaign, the Aviation Detachment was left behind in Burlington. In July 1943, the Aviation Detachment was disbanded and the pilots and crews were reassigned in the Army Air Corps. Only Lieutenant Charles B. Rimmer





The "Ace of Spades" of the FSSF Cannon Company was an M-3 Halftrack mounting a 75mm cannon. The Cannon Company joined the FSSF at Anzio when the 6615th Ranger Force (Provisional) was disbanded in 1944.

remained with the Force and served as Brigadier General Frederick's pilot throughout the war.²³ Although the Aviation Detachment remained behind when the FSSF deployed to combat, the rest of the Support Battalion moved with the Force.

Beginning with the landing at Kiska, Alaska, on 15 August 1943 until the FSSF disbanded in southern France on 5 December 1944, the "Devil's Brigade" was in almost continuous combat from Kiska to the Apennine mountains of southern Italy, then to Anzio, the liberation of Rome, and ultimately serving as the spearhead of the amphibious invasion of southern France. During the Anzio campaign, which ran from early February to the first of May 1944, the Force held a division-sized sector of thirteen kilometers despite numbering less than 1,500 men.²⁴ To help relieve pressure on the lightly held defensive line, men of the Service Battalion conducted anti-parachute patrols and rear-area security missions in addition to providing the logistical support and maintenance.²⁵ It was during the Anzio campaign that the Force gained another element unique to the organization—the Cannon Company.

The Cannon Company was part of the 1st Ranger Battalion in North Africa. Formed by Lieutenant Colonel William O. Darby to provide firepower to the Ranger forces, the Cannon Company consisted of four M-3 halftracks mounting 75mm guns.²⁶ Known as Darby's "Ace in the Hole," the four vehicles were called the "Ace of Spades," "Ace of Hearts," "Ace of Diamonds," and "Ace of Clubs." The Cannon Company came to the FSSF at Anzio fol-

lowing the disastrous 30 January 1944 attack on Cisterna that resulted in the destruction of the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions. In the attack, the two battalions lost 12 killed, 36 wounded, and 743 captured when the Germans encircled them.²⁷ This action resulted in the disbanding of the 6615th Ranger Force (Provisional) and the Cannon Company was assigned to the Force along with many of the Rangers from the 4th Battalion. The Cannon Company provided fire support to the Force during the breakout of Anzio toward Rome and in Operation DRAGOON, the invasion of Southern France.

The relatively few casualties incurred during the defense of Anzio

and the new personnel replacements boosted the combat regiments of the Force to 104 officers and 1,966 enlisted men when the unit led the breakout toward Rome in May 1944. On 1 May, the Service Battalion strength, in contrast, had dropped from 59 officers and 666 enlisted to 55 and 629, respectively.²⁸ Despite the reduction, the men of the Service Battalion continued to provide the same high level of support to the FSSF during the rapid advance into Rome and later in the invasion of southern France during Operation DRAGOON.

The FSSF executed an amphibious landing on the Iles D'Hyeres on 14 August 1944. Protecting the southern flank of the Seventh Army as it drove into France, the Force moved diagonally north and east up the Mediterranean coast toward the French-Italian border. Facing increasingly disorganized German resistance, the Force pushed forward to the mountainous French-Italian border, reaching it on 1 November 1944. At this point, the Force virtually ceased conducting active combat operations. On 28 November 1944, the unit was relieved in place by the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and retired to the town of Villeneuve-Loubet for deactivation. The FSSF was disbanded on 5 December 1944. The Canadians returned to the Canadian Army, most to the Parachute Brigade, and the Americans were either dispersed to other units or returned to the United States depending on the number of combat points accumulated.

In the latter stages of the FSSF operations in France, the Service Battalion kept supplies moving forward in the rugged terrain along the border. Mules were often



In the mountains of Italy, mules were the primary means of transportation. Sergeant Lew Merriam traded his photographer role for a stint as a mule skinner.

the primary means of transportation. As was done in Italy, “Freddy’s Freighters” loaded ammunition and supplies onto pack boards and man-carried them up the mountains. Until the very end, the Service Battalion continued to provide the logistical support to the Forcemen. Unique units within a unique unit, the Service Battalion, Photo Detachment, Aviation Detachment, and Cannon Company all contributed to the success of the organization and allowed the First Special Service Force to “punch above its weight.” An organization tailored for a special mission, few units of this size had the same impact in combat as the Force. ♠

The author would like to thank Thomas Hope and Ray Cart for their invaluable assistance with this article.

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The SOD-JF in Iraq:

A “Total Force” Success Story

The Trials and Triumphs of the Maryland Army National Guard’s Special Operations Detachment–Joint Forces in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: 2002–2003



By Alan D. Meyer

ON Tuesday, 15 October 2002, James Croall, general manager for a regional truck tire sales and service company and a Special Forces colonel in the Army National Guard, was balancing the demands of a civilian job with the task of preparing for his unit activation ceremony. In the year since its inception in the fall of 2001, the Special Operations Detachment–Joint Forces (SOD-JF) had grown from just two members into a functioning organization based in Baltimore, Maryland. In less than a year, Colonel Croall and Sergeant Major Arnold “J.R.” Macmillan* had managed to fill twenty of the unit’s thirty authorized positions, many with experienced officers and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) with Special Forces and Military Intelligence backgrounds. More recruiting, staff training, and a major joint exercise were on the calendar for 2003. At the moment, however, Croall and his staff were focused on the upcoming ceremony.¹

SOD-JF flash.



Everything was going as planned . . . until Colonel Croall’s phone rang. It was Major Brett Savage*, the unit’s executive officer. Savage had just left a meeting at the National Guard Bureau (NGB) headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. His message was simple but urgent: “We need to meet.” As Croall later recalled: “I met Brett Savage at a McDonalds on his way home from NGB, and he gave me the word.”² The U.S. military was ramping up for a potential invasion of Iraq if diplomatic talks with Saddam Hussein proved fruitless. As part of these preparations, four of the six newly-created National Guard SODs, including the SOD-JF, were to mobilize as soon as possible. Thus, in little more than a year, and far sooner than anticipated, the SOD-JF had evolved from a mere concept into a unit mobilized for the Global War on Terrorism, with its citizen-soldiers first learning about the call-up before they had officially unfurled their guidon.³

Because the SOD-JF spent its entire twelve-month mobilization attached to the 5th Special Forces Group (SFG), in many ways the Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

wartime histories of these two units are inseparable. The small National Guard detachment was integrated almost from the start as 5th SFG commander Colonel John Mulholland assembled the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–West (CJSOTF-W) headquarters around his own staff beginning in late 2002. SOD-JF members participated in prewar planning, the overseas deployment of the Special Forces Group, and the CJSOTF-W rapid buildup into

a huge multinational task force in the months shortly before the war. During the invasion, SOD-JF members helped to direct and support combat operations on two separate fronts focused on three-quarters of Iraq.

By the time President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat operations on 1 May 2003, the SOD-JF was already involved in transforming CJSOTF-W into CJSOTF-AP (Arabian Peninsula), moving the task force headquarters from its remote desert base to Baghdad, and taking responsibility for all Coalition special operations forces (SOF) in Iraq. Over the coming months, SOD-JF members served as primary staff directors or headed key staff elements in CJSOTF-AP that were directing and supporting SOF security and stability operations throughout Iraq.⁴ Their efforts and contributions did not go unnoticed: awards included ten Combat Infantryman Badges, five Bronze Star Medals, and sixteen Joint Service Commendation Medals. When the SOD-JF prepared to leave Baghdad at the end of its tour, Colonel Hector Pagan, who had assumed command of both 5th SFG and CJSOTF-AP from Colonel Mulholland in June 2003, offered the highest praise possible: “I can’t tell who’s National Guard, who’s a Reservist, and who’s a full-time 5th Grouper. I just know who I go to when I want to get something done. And you’re it.”⁵

Viewed in retrospect, the SOD-JF experience in Iraq epitomized the “Total Force” concept: the smooth integration of active and reserve units (U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard) and personnel into a single joint

*Pseudonyms have been used for all military personnel with a rank lower than lieutenant colonel.

task force to conduct sustained combat operations.⁶ Success hinged on augmentees arriving at the right place and time with the military skills needed to get the job done, and this was indeed a part of the SOD-JF story. But a closer look at the unit's contributions revealed that much of its success also depended on the civilian backgrounds and skills that SOD-JF brought to the fight—and on the CJSOTF commander's willingness to make the best use of these citizen-soldiers even when this required thinking outside the box. The purpose of this article is to provide a brief history of this small National Guard unit's employment during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, with an emphasis on how a unique blend of military and civilian expertise contributed significantly to the successes of CJSOTF-W and CJSOTF-AP.

Getting off on the right foot did not guarantee success, but it certainly helped to set the stage. For the SOD-JF, this meant mobilizing quickly enough to meet the needs of the 5th SFG, its gaining wartime unit. As described earlier, the SOD-JF received its first notice of an impending call-up on 15 October 2002. Formal notification came via Department of the Army Mobilization Order 228-03, dated 8 November 2002, which ordered the unit to active duty twelve days later on 20 November.⁷ Because Department of Defense policy calls for thirty days formal notice prior to an involuntary mobilization, SOD-JF members were asked to voluntarily sign a "thirty-day waiver" in

order to meet this greatly compressed timeline. Only one declined, foreshadowing the high level of dedication that most unit members would exhibit throughout the coming year. That individual left the SOD-JF for a position elsewhere, to avoid the deployment. Thus, nineteen of the original twenty unit members would serve with the 5th SFG in Iraq.

The same Department of the Army order called for the SOD-JF to report to the Fort Campbell, Kentucky Mobilization Center by 25 November, just days before Thanksgiving. However, when Colonel Croall learned that this facility would be closed for the extended holiday weekend, he negotiated a new departure date so that his troops could spend Thanksgiving at home with their families instead of sitting idle in Kentucky. On the morning of Sunday, 1 December 2002, SOD-JF members assembled again at the 5th Regiment Armory in downtown Baltimore, loaded their gear, kissed loved ones goodbye, and boarded a chartered bus for Fort Campbell. Major Alex Martin*, a unit operations officer, had gone ahead the week before to serve as a one-man advance party. When the bus rolled up to a back gate at Fort Campbell late that Sunday night, Martin was waiting to sign the soldiers in and lead them to their barracks. By the end of the week, the SOD-JF had cleared the Mobilization Station and were in-processing with the 5th SFG. They were just in time for "Internal Look 02" (IL02), the U.S.

The Story Behind the SODs

THE Special Operations Detachment concept addressed two longstanding shortfalls within the Special Forces community. First, in states with Army National Guard Special Forces units, most senior personnel eventually had to move into non-SF jobs due to the scarcity of upper-level jobs. While these NCOs and officers were often a boon to the conventional units they joined, this career progression meant that countless years of accumulated expertise were lost to the special operations community. Second, the increased operational tempo associated with post-Cold War era peacekeeping and contingency operations caused problems. Active duty SF Groups and regional Theater Special Operations Commands were frequently tapped to provide senior personnel "out of hide" in order to run a Joint Special Operations Task Force headquarters in conflict regions like Bosnia, leaving only a skeleton staff back home to take care of ongoing missions and future planning.¹

Starting in the early 1990s, leaders and

senior staff at the National Guard Bureau and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) started exploring ways to address both issues. One proposal involved creating, within the National Guard force structure, small detachments made up of senior SF operations and intelligence personnel that mirrored the basic command and staff structure of a JSOTF headquarters. This approach would keep senior National Guard SF personnel together instead of scattering and squandering their expertise as had happened in the past. It would also provide trained and experienced staff for a JSOTF during times of war, relieving pressure on the active force.²

James Croall, then an SF lieutenant colonel serving as the Maryland Army National Guard Troop Command S-3 (a non-SF staff position), recalled: "It took probably five or six years of studies and assessment before USSOCOM . . . finally took the initiative to see if they could form these units." He recalled that Colonel Jim Smith, a former Maryland

Army National Guard officer who was by this time working at the NGB, shepherded the idea from concept to reality, a process that included convincing the Adjutant Generals of several states to accept responsibility for these new units. Ironically, one concern was that the new SODs—designed in part to make better use of senior 18-series personnel who had "outgrown" the limited positions available in SF companies, battalions, and groups—would themselves strip MOS-qualified personnel from the National Guard's 19th and 20th SFGs. Eventually Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Washington agreed to host the first six SODs.³

1 USSOCOM History, 15th Anniversary Edition (MacDill AFB, FL: USSOCOM History and Research Office, 2002), 17; "SOCOM SOD Information Brief to CJSOTF-AP & SOD-J," PowerPoint briefing, 19 August 2003, slide 17, CD, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Colonel James E. Croall, interview by Major Alan D. Meyer, 10 April 2005, Baltimore, MD, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

2 Croall interview.

3 Croall interview.



The 5th Regiment Armory in downtown Baltimore, Maryland, is the home station for the SOD-JF.

Central Command prewar command and control exercise that started on 7 December 2002. This was important. By participating in IL02, the SOD-JF was on the ground floor when Colonel Mulholland and the 5th Group were assembling the CJSOTF-W staff using augmentees from every U.S. service and two Coalition partner nations.

Simply chronologically listing these dates fails to convey the effort it took for the SOD-JF to arrive “just-in-time.” Wartime mobilization places huge demands on citizen-soldiers. Not only must the soldiers prepare themselves and their unit for deployment, but they must also arrange to leave their civilian careers and prepare their family members—many of whom have no prior experience “navigating” the military system as “dependents”—for an extended absence. This was true for members of the SOD-JF. Major Martin, the advanced liaison (ADVON) to the 5th SFG, was notified of the call-up by cell phone on 19 October while driving home from his honeymoon. He turned to his bride of one week and said: “I guess the honeymoon’s over.” As he drove toward home near Washington, DC, she pulled a pen from the glove compartment to start a “to do” list on the back of an old envelope. Item number one, he recalls, was to get her enrolled as a military dependent through the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. Item number two was equally pragmatic: “update will.”⁸

While everyone faced challenges on the home front, it is difficult to top those of Major Calvin Striker* or the husband-and-wife team of Majors Brett Savage and Gwen Cook*. When Striker, the unit J-3 and a strategic marketing expert at a Fortune 500 company, told his employer that he was being mobilized, his boss told him to finish all projects—originally due in February 2003—before leaving for war. As he worked relentlessly to meet this new deadline, Striker also purchased a house in his wife’s hometown of Omaha, Nebraska, and moved his household there from Erie, Pennsylvania . . . all in less than a month. Meanwhile, Savage and Cook—the unit’s executive officer and J-4 (logistics), respectively—were likewise busy. Savage had just become the Director of

Public Health Preparedness for the State of Pennsylvania. Both he and Cook, a registered nurse, had to arrange leaves-of-absence from work as they cleared out of their house and placed their worldly goods in storage. For the next year, the Army became, quite literally, their home.⁹

Even as they put their personal affairs in order, SOD-JF members also began working to ready the unit for deployment. The J-3 rescheduled several months’ worth of weekend drills so soldiers could complete last-minute training and administrative affairs in late October and early November.¹⁰ In addition to the shorter than usual timeline, the SOD-JF faced pre-mobilization tasks that a more mature reserve unit would have already completed. For example, the initial soldier readiness exercise—to update training records and personnel files, receive immunizations, and undergo medical screening—had been scheduled for 2003. These tasks had to be crammed into the few weeks between activation and the mobilization date. Likewise, the SOD-JF was not scheduled to receive individual or unit equipment until mid-2003. Suddenly the J-4 had to come up with weapons, helmets, rucksacks, web gear, sleeping bags, and protective masks for an extended deployment into a potential combat zone, all in very short order.¹¹

With his staff firmly focused on near-term issues, Colonel Croall looked ahead to the long-term mission. Within two weeks of receiving the alert from Major Savage, Croall was at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to meet with the 5th SFG commander and staff. He arrived with a list of questions from every SOD-JF staff section. Major Marc DeAngelo*, the J-6 (communications), who not only knew the SOD-JF’s strengths and weaknesses, but also knew his way around Fort Campbell, accompanied him. As an active duty Signal officer, DeAngelo had served with distinction during Operation DESERT STORM commanding the 5th SFG’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company. When Croall and DeAngelo walked into their first meeting, 5th SFG commander Colonel John Mulholland surprised members of his senior staff by greeting DeAngelo like a long-lost friend: “Marc, how the hell are you?”¹²

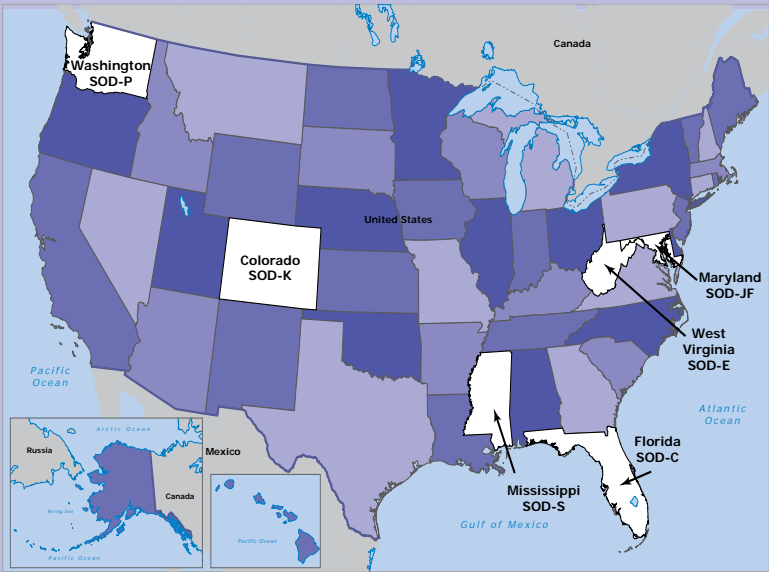
While this personal connection probably helped first impressions, Croall and DeAngelo accomplished a lot in two days. Colonel Mulholland and his staff explained what they knew of the coming operation. In return, Croall and DeAngelo provided an honest assessment of the unit readiness. Together, they filled openings in the Joint Manning Document (JMD) that expanded the 5th SFG headquarters to a CJSOTF. This commander-to-commander approach matched individual talent and expertise to JMD positions far better than the usual method of blindly filling slots based on rank and MOS/branch. Croall also made it a point to relieve any apprehensions Mulholland may have felt by having another O-6 (colonel) assigned to his command. Ultimately, they decided that Croall could best serve as the CJSOTF-W liaison officer to Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) in Kuwait, the headquarters responsible for all Coalition land forces during the invasion. Finally, Croall

Mission, Organization, and Affiliation

IN 2001, USSOCOM designated a total of six National Guard Special Operations Detachments, each aligned with an existing Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC). While every SOD has the same basic mission and organization, each one trains with a specific TSOC during peacetime and can expect to be the first SOD mobilized in response to conflict within its specific region. Unit names reflect this war-trace affiliation: SOD-S is aligned with SOCSOUTH (Special Operations Command–U.S. Southern Command), SOD-E with SOCEUR (European Command), SOD-C with SOCCENT (Central Command), SOD-P with SOCPAC (Pacific Command), and SOD-K with SOCKOR (U.S. Forces Korea). Only SOD-JF, aligned with SOCFJCOM (U.S. Joint Forces Command), has a functional instead of geographic alignment.¹

Each SOD is authorized thirty personnel and roughly mirrors the basic organization of a Joint Special Operations Task Force headquarters (see Organization Chart). Including the commander and sergeant major plus a twelve-man Operations section (J-3), there are fourteen slots for Special Forces officers and NCOs. The Intelligence section (J-2) has six positions, while the Personnel (J-1), Logistics (J-4), and Communications (J-6) sections each have three positions. One legal NCO brings the total to thirty. Eventually, these may become joint units with the proposed addition of fifteen Air National Guard personnel to each SOD.²

intelligence, and support staff officers and NCOs to augment a theater-level JSOTF or TSOC. In theory, a SOD could also provide the core command and staff structure

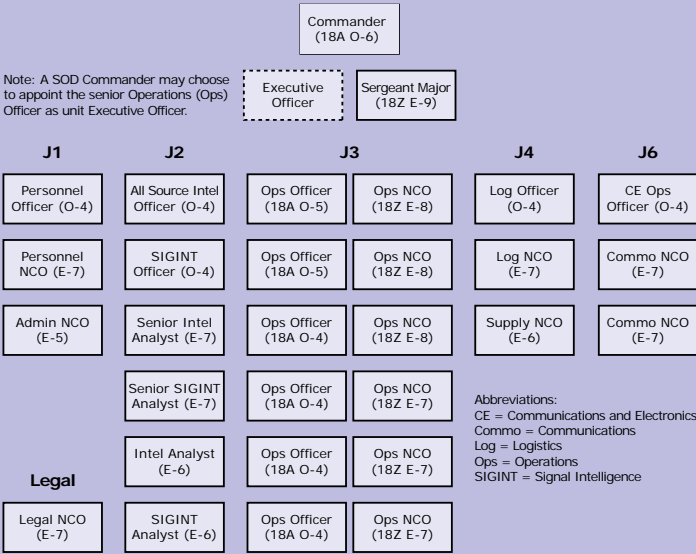


Home states of the original six National Guard SODs.

around which a full JSOTF is formed. At the state level, each SOD stands ready to provide command and control expertise to support state or federal government response to a local, regional, or federal emergency.³

Although the SODs are USSOCOM assets, they have close ties to USASOC. Nearly half of the authorized positions are senior 18-series MOS/career branch NCOs and officers, all of whom must have trained and served earlier in their careers in active or reserve Special Forces units. Furthermore, many members of the intelligence, communications, logistics, and personnel sections also have ARSOF experience. Finally, USASOC soldiers may well find themselves working directly alongside members of a SOD in a combat zone. For example, two of the four SODs mobilized in late 2002, SOD-JF and SOD-E, were attached directly to the 5th and 10th Special Forces Groups, respectively, helping these units to form the headquarters of two Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.⁴

1 Colonel James E. Croall, interview by Major Alan D. Meyer, 10 April 2005, Baltimore, MD, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
2 “SOCOM SOD Information Brief to CJSOTF-AP & SOD-J,” PowerPoint briefing, 19 August 2003, slides 4–5, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
3 “SOCOM SOD Information Brief,” slide 3.
4 “SOCOM SOD Information Brief,” slides 7–8.



Basic organization chart for a Special Operations Detachment.

Because the SODs are National Guard assets, they have both federal and state missions. The SOD federal wartime mission is to provide fully-trained operations,

and Mulholland discussed when and how the SOD-JF would join with the 5th SFG, before Internal Look 02 kicked off on 7 December 2002.¹³

SOD-JF members have few fond memories of their month spent at Fort Campbell. While participating in Internal Look 02 and the pre-combat planning that followed helped them integrate into CJSOTF-W, there was still a sense that things were in limbo. Everyone worked long hours, but then the 5th SFG was able to go home at night while the SOD-JF returned to its dreary rooms in a dilapidated three-story cinderblock barracks. These quarters, which post engineers had condemned as “unfit for habitation,” were several miles from the temporary CJSOTF-W headquarters set up in the 5th SFG Isolation Facility. The only mess hall open to the SOD-JF was in another distant location. Since the SOD-JF had been specifically instructed not to bring privately owned vehicles to Fort Campbell, this meant that just getting around was a problem. Juggling two rental vans among nineteen individuals with widely conflicting work schedules proved the first real test of tempers. Cold, gray, wet weather during the weeks leading up to Christmas combined with continued uncertainty regarding the mission—and where the SOD-JF might end up if there was no invasion of Iraq—put a damper on pre-holiday cheer. When the first floor bathroom at the barracks backed up, flooding the entryway with a lake of raw sewage, SOD-JF members started joking: “it just doesn’t get any better than this.”¹⁴

But then Colonel Mulholland declared a short break for the holidays with the understanding all might have to return on a moment’s notice. Colonel Croall authorized the SOD-JF to go home for Christmas. At a party in downtown Clarkesville, Tennessee, Majors Cook and Savage gave an early Christmas gift to everyone, a striking black ceramic coffee mug with the 5th SFG logo embossed in gold. There was more than a little symbolism in this—the SOD-JF’s destiny was tied to the 5th SFG.

After Christmas, events unfolded quickly. Several

SOD-JF members were called back on New Year’s Day to deploy to the Middle East with the advance party. Their job was to set up a forward base in a remote desert location near the Iraqi border. Back at Fort Campbell, the 5th SFG finished packing its gear for overseas shipment while more augmentees arrived. After much wrangling over which military agency would pay (NGB, Fort Campbell Garrison, or 5th SFG), the SOD-JF relocated from the dilapidated barracks into an off-post hotel. The detachment would not enjoy these new quarters for long. Major Alex Martin and Sergeant First Class Jamie Mayberry* left to join Special Operations Command, U.S. Central Command (SOCCENT) in Tampa, Florida. Within a week, they were in Qatar serving as CJSOTF-West liaison officers to Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command (CFSOCC), SOCCENT’s forward-deployed headquarters. Meanwhile, Colonel Croall flew to Kuwait to begin his duties as liaison officer to the CFLCC. By mid-January, all members of the SOD-JF had deployed to the Middle East to join the 5th SFG and prepare for combat. Most would not be home again until October 2003, a year after their unit activation ceremony.¹⁵

To appreciate the extent of SOD-JF’s role in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, one must remember that OIF differed significantly from its predecessor in Afghanistan, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Begun some eighteen months earlier, 5th SFG teams worked closely with the Afghan irregulars of the Northern Alliance to overthrow the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Although the operation required significant support in the form of air strikes and aerial re-supply, conventional ground forces were noticeably absent from the battlefield until early 2002, after most of the country was secured.¹⁶

The war in Iraq, on the other hand, entailed a full-scale ground, air, and sea invasion against a massive conventional force. Shortly before the invasion on 20 March 2003, 5th SFG teams and Coalition special operations forces infiltrated Iraq’s western desert. Their mission was to work with the Coalition air power to prevent Iraq from launching theater ballistic missiles (TBM) toward Israel as had happened during Operation DESERT STORM. In

With it spread out on the barracks floor, Major Calvin Striker organizes some of the combat equipment issued at Fort Campbell on 14 December 2002.

SOD-JF members pose for a group photo in the snow outside the 5th SFG headquarters at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, December 2002. The anti-aircraft gun in the foreground was captured by the 5th SFG during Operation DESERT STORM.



southern Iraq, 5th SFG teams were also inserted ahead of conventional Army and Marine forces. These teams secured key sites and conducted strategic reconnaissance in support of the main land attack. They also pinpointed specific hostile targets as U.S. and British tanks and infantry assaulted enemy strongholds. Both of these missions—conducting the counter-TBM fight in the west and supporting the conventional invasion in the south—required considerable planning and constant coordination at every level to prevent fratricide and to maximize chances for success.

From the time the SOD-JF was attached to the 5th SFG in early December 2002, its members were incorporated into key staff roles in CJSOTF-W. They worked in the Joint Operations Center (JOC), Future Plans (J-35) shop, and filled leadership and analyst positions in the Intelligence (J-2) section. SOD-JF members also worked in Personnel (J-1), Logistics (J-4), and Communications (J-6). Three served in positions unrelated to their MOS: one as the information management officer and the others with the Base Camp Engineering section. SOD-JF members also served as liaison officers to two separate higher headquarters. After the invasion ended and CJSOTF-W evolved into CJSOTF-AP in May 2003, many 5th SFG staff members redeployed home. The CJSOTF commander filled his vacancies with augmentees who had proven themselves during the first phase of the war.

As a result, by the summer of 2003, many SOD-JF members were primary staff officers and NCOs supervising and supporting all special operations in Iraq. Major Striker (J-35), Major DeAngelo (J-6), Major Jason Miller* (J-1), and Major Marvin Blocker* (Joint Fires Element) became section directors. In the JOC, Major Savage became the JOC chief and Sergeant Major Macmillan, the senior NCO. From there Savage tracked all convoys and operations that left the base camp, including the weekly re-supply missions to downtown Baghdad led by his wife, Major Cook, the chief procurement officer (J-4).

When both CFLCC and CFSOCC re-deployed stateside after 1 May 2002, Colonel Croall and Major Martin were the CJSOTF-AP commander's choice to liaison with Combined Joint Task Force Seven (CJTF-7). Meanwhile, SOD-JF NCOs continued to serve as key players, including: Master Sergeant Carl Dirk*, ground operations officer in the JOC; Master Sergeants John Brown* and Roger Cantrell*, senior members of the Base Engineering Team; and Sergeants First Class Ben Murray* and Jeffrey Stone*, along with Staff Sergeant Jack Langley*, who all worked on important projects within the J-2.¹⁷

For the SOD-JF, Hemingway's adage "You make your own luck. . ." applied not only to going to war, but also to coming home. As the unit's twelve-month mobilization neared completion, Colonel Croall began to receive conflicting messages from stateside headquarters (National Guard Bureau and USASOC) that said, in essence: first, SOD-JF mobilization orders would not be extended (this was before the Department of Defense changed its policy and began to extend reservists beyond the one-year



Members of SOD-JF helped build the CJSOTF-W headquarters from scratch prior to the invasion of Iraq. Shown here is the construction of the shell that became the Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF).

call-up)); second, the unit could not return home until replaced; and third, no replacement unit had been identified, much less notified.¹⁸ Croall saw a potential "Catch-22" situation unfolding: if no one took action, his unit would eventually find itself still living and working in a combat zone when its mobilization orders expired and the Army dropped its personnel from active duty. Colonel Croall and 5th SFG Commander Colonel Pagan stubbornly pushed the issue through each echelon of higher command until, in an eleventh-hour decision, U.S. Special Operations Command notified the Colorado National Guard's SOD-K (Special Operations Detachment-Korea) that it would replace the SOD-JF.¹⁹

Major Martin drew the "lucky straw" to brief SOD-K members, to help them mobilize, and then to accompany the detachment to Iraq to make certain, as Colonel Pagan put it jokingly, "that nobody got lost along the way in Germany during Oktoberfest." Martin was up to the task. He knew the operational overview in Iraq as a liaison officer to CJTF-7. He also knew his way around Fort Carson, Colorado. This was not only the Mobilization Station

Outgoing commander Colonel John F. Mulholland Jr., Major General Geoffrey C. Lambert, and incoming commander Colonel Hector E. Pagan salute the colors during the change-of-command ceremony in Baghdad. Pagan assumed command of both 5th SFG and CJSOTF-AP on 24 June 2003.



Where Are They Now?

Two new members joined the SOD-JF in theater. Subtracting the one original member who did not deploy, this means that a total of twenty-one served in Iraq. Within two years of returning home, only nine of these twenty-one were still with the unit. The SOD-JF quickly rebounded—by the end of 2005, twenty-six of the unit's thirty slots were filled, five more than its wartime peak—but this high turnover meant that considerable hard-earned institutional knowledge was gone.¹ What happened? By design, every SOD is staffed mainly with senior personnel. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that three chose to retire soon after returning from Iraq. Two took full-time jobs in the military which required them to leave the SOD-JF. Three more moved to other units within the National Guard or Army Reserve citing civilian or military career progression as reasons (for instance, one moved halfway across the U.S. to take a new civilian job, which made drilling in Maryland impractical; another could not be promoted without leaving the SOD-JF). Four other SOD-JF members left the military.

Equally dramatic, at least nine of these twenty-one returning veterans experienced a significant change in civilian career within this same two-year period. Though most of these were either a promotion or a new and sometimes dramatically different career opportunity, this still showed that mobilization for war could have far-reaching effects in the lives of citizen-soldiers. As a small, rank-heavy special operations unit, the SOD-JF can hardly be cited as representative of the Total Force. But just as its contributions and accomplishments during the war were crucial to mission success, the high turnover rate in both military and civilian jobs afterward reinforced the realization that sending citizen-soldiers to war may have long-term, unintended consequences for the Total Force.²

1 Alan D. Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War: Special Operations Detachment-Joint Forces, Maryland Army National Guard, in Operation Iraqi Freedom: 2002–2003," unpublished manuscript, 2004, 71–77, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

2 For example, the unit's after action report briefing, while overwhelmingly positive regarding the overall SOD-JF experience during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, warned that repeated deployments could affect readiness: "SOD-JF soldiers have concerns of possible remobilization in 1–2 yrs; This will have negative impact on retention and recruiting." "SOD-JF MDARNG Operation IRAQI FREEDOM After Action Review," slide 15, PowerPoint briefing, 20 February 2004, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

for SOD-K, but also home to the 10th SFG, which was slated to replace the 5th SFG in Iraq later that fall. Colonel Michael Repass, 10th SFG's commander, had generously offered his unit's resources to smooth the way for the SOD-K, and Martin, a former 10th Grouper, knew Repass because they had served together in Bosnia.²⁰

Except for the thump of mortar rounds falling on Baghdad International Airport as the SOD-K replacements arrived, the battle handover was remarkably uneventful. By 5 October 2003, the SOD-JF, along with some 5th SFG members, were homeward bound on a C-5A Galaxy. After arriving at Fort Campbell in the early morning, the SOD-JF headed to the mess hall to enjoy their first genuine American breakfast in almost a year. But, it was too early to relax, because the unit's mobilization orders had not been extended. The detachment had to finish demobilizing before terminal leave started in late October. Thus, the war for SOD-JF ended just as it had begun, in a rush.²¹

This small and highly specialized unit of experienced officers and senior NCOs does not represent a typical reserve forces unit, nor should its experience with the 5th SFG in Iraq be held up as the norm. But in a broader sense, its mobilization and subsequent contributions to CJSOTF-W and CJSOTF-AP highlight the central role that augmentees, and in particular citizen-soldiers of the National Guard and Reserves, have and continue to play in the ongoing Global War on Terrorism. While the SOD-JF deployment to Iraq truly represented "A 'Total Force' Success Story," there was another side. The unit's high post-deployment turnover in personnel hints that employing augmentees in this manner, while useful in the short term, has long-term consequences to the Total Force. ♣

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Endnotes

- 1 Colonel James E. Croall, interview by Major Alan D. Meyer, 10 April 2005, Baltimore, MD, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Major Calvin Striker*, "T-SOCD Training Calendar for TY 2003," undated draft memo, circa late-2001/early-2002, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Major Calvin Striker*, "Monthly Training Breakout," spreadsheet, circa 2002, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 Croall interview.
- 3 Croall interview. Although the activation ceremony did not take place until 20 October 2002, technically the SOD-JF was activated on 1 October 2002, fifteen days before Major Savage* received the verbal warning order that the unit would be mobilized.
- 4 "Special Operations Detachment-Joint Forces (SOD-JF) Operation IRAQI FREEDOM After Action Review, 20 November 2002–19 November 2003," memo, 28 October 2002, 1–3, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

- 5 Alan D. Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War: Special Operations Detachment-Joint Forces, Maryland Army National Guard, in Operation Iraqi Freedom: 2002-2003," unpublished manuscript, 2004, 15, 69, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 For a description of the history and possible future of the Total Force concept in the U.S. military, see Brian D. Jones, "The Abrams Doctrine: Total Force Foundation or Enduring Fallacy?" (Carlisle Barracks, PA, Army War College: February 2004) [available online at: <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA423689>].
- 7 "DA MOB Order 228-03," 8 November 2002, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 8 Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 15.
- 9 Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 15.
- 10 Major Calvin Striker*, "Special Monthly Training Schedule for 26 October 2002—Change 1," circa late October 2002, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Major Calvin Striker*, "Special Monthly Training Schedule for 23-24 NOVEMBER 2002," circa early November 2002, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. These indicated that the SOD-JF went above and beyond the minimum train-up and preparation for mobilization, for instance, on 23-24 November unit members completed two days of training on C2PC, the computer software they would soon be using for real-time battle-tracking as members of the CJSOTF-W staff.
- 11 Croall interview; "SOD-JF After Action Review," 4-5; "SOD-JF MDARNG Operation IRAQI FREEDOM After Action Review," PowerPoint briefing, 20 February 2004, slide 7, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Major Gwen Cook*, "OCIE List," message to SOD-JF members, 23 October 2002, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Captain Alex Martin*, "Memorandum for Record, SUBJECT: Status of OCIE Issue for CPT Alex Martin," memo, 25 October 2002, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 12 Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 21.
- 13 Croall interview; SOD-JF J-3, "Topics for Discussion (draft), 5th SFG visit 28-29 Oct 02," informal memo to Colonel Croall, copy, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 14 Major Calvin Striker*, telephonic interview by Major Alan D. Meyer, 4 March 2006, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 17.
- 15 Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 19.
- 16 See Charles H. Briscoe et al, *Weapon of Choice: U.S. Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003).
- 17 For a general overview of unit member contributions, see: "SOD-JF SOD Conference Presentation," PowerPoint briefing, 19 August 2003, slide 11, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; "SOD-JF After Action Review," PowerPoint briefing, slides 9-11; Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 25-55. Considerable details regarding SOD-JF contributions to CJSOTF-W and CJSOTF-AP are found in the end-of-tour awards for unit members submitted through the 5th Special Forces Group chain-of-command. See the following "Narrative" sections of recommendations for awards (listed alphabetically, note that award recommended did not always correspond to award received): Major David Adair* (Joint Service Achievement Medal for 15 June 2003 to 1 October 2003); Major Marvin Blocker* (Joint Service Commendation Medal for 23 January 2003 to 17 May 2003); Sergeant First Class Randall Braveheart* (Bronze Star Medal for 16 July 2003 to 1 October 2003); Master Sergeant Roger Cantrell* (Joint Service Commendation Medal for 5 January 2003 to 12 August 2003); Staff Sergeant Jack Langley* (Joint Service Achievement Medal for 16 May 2003 to 1 October 2003); Sergeant Major Arnold Macmillan* (Bronze Star Medal for 2 July 2003 to 1 October 2003); Major Jason Miller* (Bronze Star Medal for 16 July 2003 to 1 October 2003); Sergeant First Class Ben Murray* (Joint Service Achievement Medal for 1 June 2003 to 1 October 2003); Sergeant First Class Jeffrey Stone* (Joint Service Achievement Medal for 1 June 2003 to 1 October 2003); Major Calvin Striker* (Bronze Star Medal for 5 January 2003 to 17 May 2003); Major Calvin Striker* (Joint Service Commendation Medal for 15 July 2003 to 1 October 2003). Copies of these awards documents are in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 18 Croall interview. Eventually the Department of Defense decided to keep mobilized troops on active duty beyond the initial twelve-month call-up, extending tours so that individuals spent a full year with "boots on the ground" in Iraq. However, because the SOD-JF had mobilized earlier than the vast majority of U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard forces involved in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, this decision was still months in the future when the end date for the unit's twelve-month orders approached.
- 19 Croall interview.
- 20 Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 67.
- 21 Meyer, "The SOD-JF at War," 67; "SOD-JF After Action Review," memo, 6-7.

Establishing a Tradition

IN addition to recruiting personnel, finding office space, and organizing training, SOD-JF commander Colonel James Croall and Sergeant Major J.R. McCulloch took on the task of establishing the new unit's symbols and traditions. Following strict guidelines from the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry, they designed a guidon (unit flag) and a coin for SOD-JF members to carry in the long-standing tradition of special operations units. The coin, which actually represents the collective input of several SOD-JF members, managed to capture—simply and elegantly—the unit's lineage and war trace affiliation. On one side, a Revolutionary War era "Minute Man"—the traditional symbol of the Army National Guard—stands beside a Special Forces crest against a field of SF green. "Maryland Army National Guard" is emblazoned across the top, while a serial number stamped on the bottom indicates when the holder joined the unit (as the first member of the SOD-JF, Colonel Croall holds coin #001; Sergeant Major McCulloch received #002). The reverse is adorned with a full-color image of the SOCJFCOM unit crest, and "Special Operations Detachment Joint Forces" is inscribed around the perimeter. Colonel Croall ordered one hundred serial-numbered coins in time for the unit's activation ceremony in October 2002. The coins were distributed to the unit's original pre-mobilization members and most of the remainder were handed out to friends of the SOD-JF during the unit's year-long mobilization. Recipients included Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, head of the NGB, who came up through the ranks in the Maryland Guard SF community; Colonels John Mulholland and Hector Pagan, 5th SFG's two commanders during the time the SOD-JF was attached; and select service members (and even a few civilians) who served honorably with or went above and beyond in their efforts to support the unit.¹

- 1 Colonel James E. Croall, interview by Major Alan D. Meyer, 10 April 2005, Baltimore, MD, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.



SOD-JF guidon and coin at the time the unit was activated in October 2002.



Herbert R. Brucker

SF Pioneer: Part II

Pre-WWII—OSS Training 1943

by Charles H. Briscoe

THE short biography and photo essay in the last issue of *Veritas* (Vol. 2 No. 2) introduced Major Herbert R. Brucker, one of the pioneers of Special Forces. In twenty years, Brucker acquired a wealth of special operations experience that merits sharing with the Force. Therefore, Part II covers his developmental period of military service before World War II as a CW (Morse Code) radio operator in an infantry regiment through his OSS (Office of Strategic Services) special operations agent training before being detailed to the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) in England. This article will show why and how Brucker was selected to train as an OSS operative, cover facets of the SO assessment and training course, and conclude with his overseas shipment to England.

The Part One photo essay introduced Herbert R. Brucker as a former radio operator of a three-man SOE team that conducted clandestine operations in France before D-Day. British special operations (SO) and special intelligence teams, unlike OSS Jedburgh and Operational Groups, had been operating behind German lines throughout Europe since late 1940. Technical Sergeant Fourth Class (T/4) Brucker was detailed from the OSS to the SOE in England because he had been raised in France and Germany, was naturally fluent in French and German, and was culturally attuned. To fully appreciate what this soldier accomplished in the Army and did for special operations, the reader must keep in mind that Brucker joined the service in 1940—at the time understanding, speaking, reading, and writing very little English. He grew up in France and Germany, living there for seventeen years. Though a graduate of the equivalent to the American high school in France, Brucker is self-educated in English and retired from the Army as a major after twenty years of service.

His French father, who immigrated to America in 1911, joined the U.S. Army as an infantryman and fought Moslems in the Philippines during the Moro War. Medically retired after losing an arm at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Ernest Brucker married the rebellious daughter of a

middle-class immigrant German family in New Jersey. Six months after the birth of Herbert on 10 October 1921, the couple relocated to Merlebach, France. Ernest became an interpreter for the U.S. Army in the Rhineland and served the French military intelligence. When Herb's mother, Gertrude Promer Brucker, was pregnant with another child, she returned to the United States. At that point in 1924, the responsibility, care, and education of Brucker became a constant game of "musical chairs."¹

He was bounced between relatives living in villages and farms in the Alsace-Lorraine—the often-contested French province bordering southern Germany—and paid caretakers in France and Germany. Then, Brucker joined his father in Metz for a short time before ending up in a Parisian boarding school with his younger brother. After that experience, Brucker returned to Merlebach to attend school and serve as an apprentice tool and die maker for a coal mining company. Finally, he took a job as a temporary agricultural worker—a "cowboy" (barefoot cow herder)—in central France, after a Parisian baker refused to hire him as a helper. Being Alsatian, his efforts to join the French Army were politely rebuffed despite war clouds building over Europe. The recruiters suggested the Foreign Legion. To make matters more difficult, it was the Great Depression.²

Thus, over the years his unique *Alemanische* (a German dialect spoken in the Alsace-Lorraine region) was transformed into high *Deutsche* and the French he had learned in Valence while "boarded" with a Muslim-Algerian family was transformed into *Parisienne* while in a boarding school north of Paris. Meanwhile, after being imprisoned in Spandau for spying, Brucker's father left for the United States with a new wife. It was an American birth certificate that finally enabled his father to bring Brucker back to the United States in November 1938.³

Having lived in France and Germany for seventeen years, Brucker was really a Frenchman with American citizenship. He struggled to learn English on the streets of Newark, New Jersey, by reading comic books, going to



Regimental Orderly Brucker, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, 1941.



Private Brucker with TG-5 Telegraph Set, .45 Pistol and Gas Mask at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, 1941.



Private Herbert R. Brucker, SN 12020283, 18th Infantry, 1st Division, Fort Hamilton, New York, November 1940.

family,” said Brucker. “The Army gave me clothes. I was served meals in a dining hall. I shared a room. I slept on a bed with sheets. Life was good.”⁵ Still, learning a new language and adapting to the culture required considerable time.

A mastery of English, however, was not essential to be a good telegrapher; Morse Code (CW) was an international language. And Private Herbert R. Brucker, Headquarters Company, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Division, became quite

proficient because he loved being a soldier and was intent on doing well. He diligently practiced Morse Code every day at Fort Hamilton to steadily increase his words-per-minute speed. Basic soldiering skills (referred to now as basic and advanced individual training) were taught by unit corporals and sergeants in pre-WWII days.⁶

By the time the 1st Division united its three infantry regiments (under the new German triangular organization) at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, to prepare for the Regular Army training exercises at Fort Benning, Georgia, scheduled for the spring of 1940, Private Brucker, wireless radio operator, could send and receive almost twenty words of CW a minute. And because he spoke two foreign languages, the young soldier was assigned to the reconnaissance element.⁷ A year later, the newly redesignated 1st “Infantry” Division would truck-convoy from Fort Devens to the Carolina Maneuvers. However, few truck drivers existed in the Army of 1941.

All soldiers in the 18th Infantry Regiment were given driving tests. There simply were not enough drivers for the trucks and command cars. Brucker remembered, “In my mind I thought that I could drive. After all, I had watched others driving . . . working the gears, the brake, clutch, and gas pedal, and steering. It didn’t seem that hard even though I had never driven. I was hoping to have my chance with something small. Instead, I was directed to a command car. I got behind the wheel, started the engine, let the clutch out, and promptly stalled it with a great lurch. So much for becoming a truck driver,” said Brucker. “And before our convoy cleared Fort Devens, there was a truck off the road in a ditch. So much for Army drivers.”⁸

The truck convoys moved day and night getting us down to the Carolinas. We stopped periodically for relief breaks, to hand-pump gas from 55-gallon drums into the

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Pre-WWII 1st Infantry Division patch.



18th Infantry Regiment Distinctive Unit Insignia.

Carolina Maneuvers

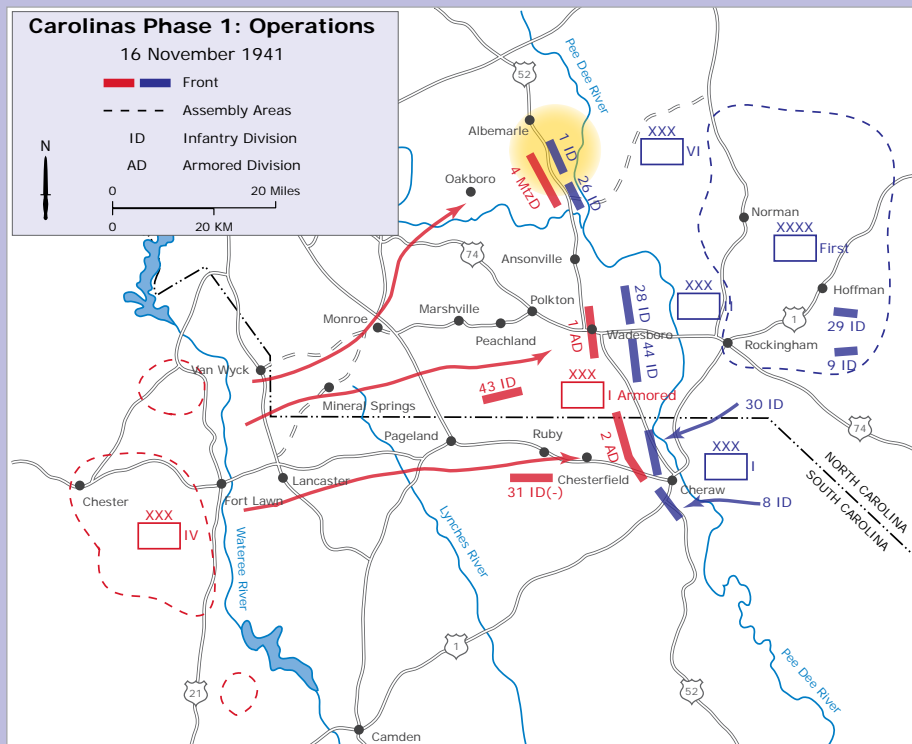
ON 1 September 1939, when Germany's invasion of Poland started World War II in Europe, the U.S. Army was ranked seventeenth among the armies of the world, just behind Romania. There were 190,000 personnel, counting the Philippine Scouts and Nurse Corps, in the U.S. Army; 45,300 of the 174,000 enlisted soldiers were serving overseas. While there were numerous division headquarters on paper, the Army had few units larger than battalions and these were quite understrength.

Though 200,000 part-time soldiers filled eighteen National Guard divisions, the regiments were maintained by skeleton cadres. The Protective Mobilization Plan of 1939–1941 that supported President Franklin D. Roosevelt's proclamation of a "limited national emergency" was the first step. That action filled the Regular Army and National Guard divisions sufficiently to maneuver as Red and Blue Armies in Louisiana and the Carolinas during the summer and fall of 1941. These "force on force" maneuvers were the largest ever conducted by the U.S. Army and its first combined arms exercises. After the Great War, periodic Regular Army–National Guard maneuvers were simply "playacting between notional forces."¹

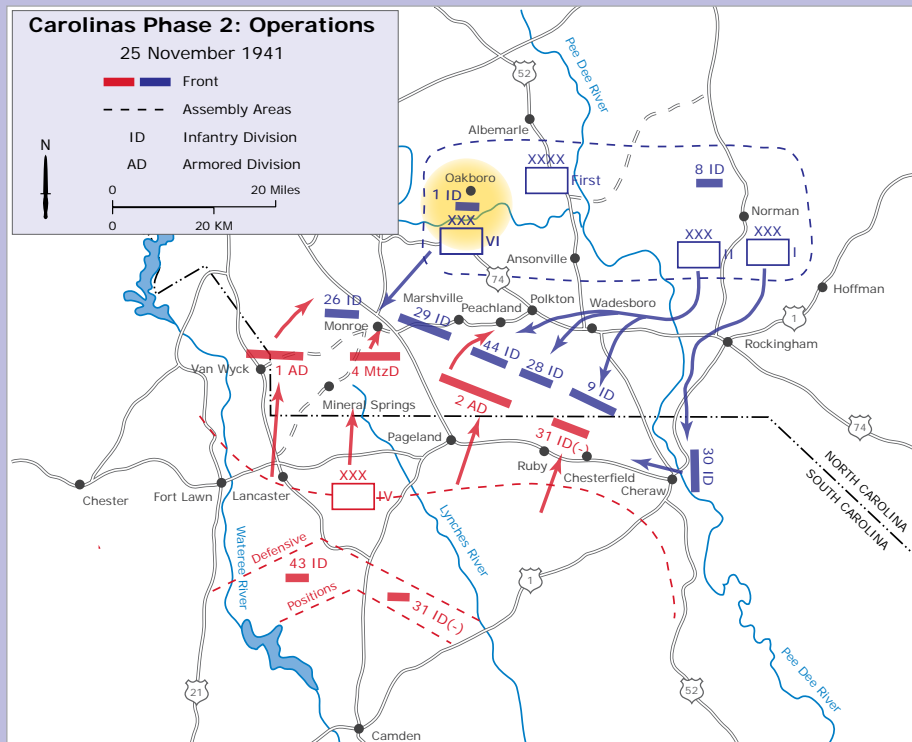
1 Christopher R. Gabel, *The U.S. Army GHQ HQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History), iii, 5, 8, 9.

2 Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers of 1941*, 50.

3 Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers of 1941*, 158, 165.



The 9,375 square-mile area of operations (AO) for the Carolina Maneuvers straddled the North Carolina–South Carolina border. The AO was a large triangle with Charlotte, North Carolina, in the northwest, Fayetteville, North Carolina, to the east, and Columbia, South Carolina, to the south.²



From left to right: Private Ferraro, Private Brucker with horseshoe roll (before it was adopted by the U.S. Army from the French Foreign Legion) during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.



18th Infantry Radio Section truck with Browning Automatic Rifle mounted for air defense during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.

Private Brucker, 18th Infantry, Radio Section, Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.



18th Infantry Radio Section wire truck and motorcycle messenger moving into bivouac during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.

Radio Section loading up to move out during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941, with Private Bishop seated on the tire, Private Geller standing to the right, and Private Pollack driving.



18th Infantry Radio Section trucks in convoy to Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941. In those days, soldiers wore Class "B" uniforms for maneuvers. Blue Army soldiers were identified by an eighteen-inch blue ribbon attached to their left shoulder epaulet; Red Army men wore red ribbons.

The 1st and 8th Infantry Divisions (triangular) were fully motorized with three attached quartermaster truck companies. They were mobile reserves for the Blue Army commanded by Lieutenant General Hugh A. Drum, the GHQ chief of staff. The 1st Infantry Division troops motor-convoeyed to and from the Carolina maneuvers of 1941.³



trucks, and chow. During the maneuvers the radio operators worked shifts. In between these, we pulled guard duty. Army Air Corps planes dropped flour sacks to simulate bombs as well as paratroopers of the Provisional Parachute Battalion stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia. The paratroopers stole the keys from trucks and created a real mess. The Army adopted a keyless ignition switch as a result. I was posted as a road guard one morning and sometime in the afternoon the regimental headquarters relocated and forgot to pick me up. When a farmer came by at dusk and asked what I was doing there, I dutifully recited my general guard orders like a good soldier. He laughed and said that my unit left hours ago. Luckily, he gave me a ride to the nearest unit, a 37mm antitank company. I was standing in the chow line when my company

commander found me and 'chewed my butt.' Now, that's what I remember about the Carolina maneuvers.⁹

It was shortly after the conclusion of the Carolina Maneuvers that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. "I remember because I was on KP [kitchen duty] when the news came over the radio. Like every military unit, we were immediately put on alert and all soldiers were recalled from pass and leave. We had spent weeks aboard merchant ships after the maneuvers to practice amphibious landings with Higgins boats so we weren't sure what the division was going to do," said Brucker. "Training was taken more seriously by everyone. After Pearl Harbor, the 1st Infantry Division maneuvered against the Texas National Guard 36th Infantry Division at Camp Blanding, Florida. Following that maneuver, I left the 'Big Red One' (1st Infantry Division). It had been my home for two years."¹⁰

In the early spring of 1942, Brucker was sent to Fort Meade, Maryland, as training cadre for the newly-formed 76th Infantry Division. His selection as a CW trainer carried an automatic promotion from private to staff sergeant. Morse Code proficiency proved to be a blessing and somewhat of a curse.¹¹ After America declared war, quality



Technical Sergeant Fourth Class Brucker, 1st Infantry Division training cadre for 100th Infantry Division, Fort Jackson, South Carolina, 1943.

trainers were needed to get new combat divisions ready for overseas. After his stint with the 76th, Staff Sergeant Brucker was reassigned to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to train CW operators in the 100th Infantry Division. By mid-1942, only privates were being permitted to volunteer for parachute school, the Rangers, and flight school as an aerial gunner or radio operator. Even after being "busted" to technical sergeant fourth class for not having his "dog tags" while on pass in Columbia, this calculated demotion still blocked him from volunteering for a combat assignment.¹²

Thus, it was pure chance that T/4 Brucker read a notice on the bulletin board soliciting foreign language-speaking volunteers for a classified assignment. Wanting to escape and get "into the war," but worried about a possible assignment as a mail censor, he made sure that he was the last to sign in and slipped into a back row seat close to an auditorium door—to enable him to bolt if it were a censor job. When the Army major ended the classified assignment brief, Brucker was shocked to be the first person called up for an interview. "After the major found out that I would volunteer for a dangerous assignment and parachute from an airplane, he sent me to



36th Infantry Division shoulder patch.



76th Infantry Division shoulder patch.



100th Infantry Division shoulder patch.

another room to talk with a captain. Hell, I'd only been on a train, aboard a ship, and ridden in cars and trucks. I'd never been inside an airplane. Since the captain spoke poor high-school French, the language test was easy," remembered Brucker. "He commented, 'You talk like a native' . . . which I was."¹³ Sometime later, T/4 Brucker had orders to the "OSS" in Washington, DC, with directions to report to Building Q. Typical of most soldiers at mid-month (when soldiers were only paid monthly), the T/4 was "broke" and had to "borrow" five dollars from his squad leader for the train to Washington. Per usual, this debt to Staff Sergeant Lightner was not repaid. Unbeknownst to either soldier, Brucker, in August 1943, had volunteered for duty with the OSS.¹⁴

It would be resourcefulness and good "street sense" that kept the barely English-literate American soldier in the OSS selection and training program. By going on the premise that his response to every situation or dilemma was being evaluated, Brucker constantly strived to do everything to the best of his ability. If he didn't fully understand the directions, he would hesitate a moment to see what the others were doing and figure out what was to be done. Sometimes this method worked and other times it did not. He could follow orders, but getting to the correct OSS training camp proved a challenge.¹⁵

Since his orders were in a sealed manila envelope, T/4 Brucker followed the instructions printed on the outside which did not specify a report date. Thus, he dutifully "reported in" on a Saturday. The duty secretary told him to come back on Monday morning. He was not due for another week. Brucker faced a weekend in Washington with a dollar and a half in his pocket. Monday morning, virtually penniless and quite hungry, he reported in again and was sent to see Mr. Ingersoll in Room 2047. He was told to go up the hill behind the building to board a truck that would arrive at 1600 hours. When three trucks arrived at the appointed hour, over thirty men, who had been "nonchalantly standing around for hours trying to be inconspicuous," climbed aboard. The trucks took them to what was probably a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp near Frederick, Maryland. "I hadn't eaten since Sunday, so finding out that the mess hall held chow for us was great," said Brucker. "I didn't mind pulling guard duty that night."¹⁶

The next morning, all new personnel were formed up in three ranks. A sergeant marched the first rank away. The rest of the men were told to take a break in the shade. While Brucker was pondering why a group of Norwegians carrying M1 Garand rifles had just double-timed past them, a runner came searching for him. The T/4 was in the wrong place (Area B) and he was to return to Washington and report to Mr. Ingersoll in Building Q. (This was George F. Ingersoll, his OSS Special Operations handler. To him Brucker was "Herbert E-54"). After their meeting, Herbert E-54 was given seventy-five dollars and told to go back home and buy specific civilian clothes—a business suit and a "lounging suit" (sports coat and slacks) in New York. He was also told that all further contacts with

OSS Training Areas

Area "A"	Advanced Training was a 5,000 acre wooded area five miles west of Quantico, Virginia.
Area "B"	Basic Training was 9,000 acres of mountainous terrain in the Catoclin National Forest twenty miles north of Frederick, Maryland.
Area "C"	Communications Training was done in 4,000 acres of wooded area adjacent to Area A.
Area "D"	Marine Training was 1,400 acres of wooded terrain on the Potomac River across from Quantico, Virginia.
Area "E"	Special Operations Covert Activities and Secret Intelligence Training was done at "The Farm."
Area "F"	OSS Operational Group (OG) Training was conducted at the Congressional Country Club in Washington, DC.



OSS Area C Training Camp.



OSS Area F Training Camp.

Ingersoll would be by telephone. Brucker was given a slip of paper with his number and dismissed. Because there was a sizeable French population in the West Side of New York City, he headed there.¹⁷

Seventy-five dollars proved insufficient for the task. As a soldier, Brucker did not have the requisite ration coupons to buy leather goods. Civilian shoes and a belt were a “bridge too far.” He returned to Washington in uniform carrying his new civilian clothes in a cardboard box along with an Army musette bag containing toilet gear. When Brucker called Ingersoll, he was instructed, “Go across Constitution Avenue to the park. Look for a gentleman wearing a white hat sitting on a bench reading a newspaper. He will leave his newspaper behind when he gets up to leave. Your instructions are inside the newspaper,” and hung up. “Sure enough, when I snatched up that newspaper and opened it there was a sealed envelope inside. Ripping it open, I saw a yellow sheet of paper inside stamped ‘SECRET’ in red and a train ticket from Baltimore to Phoenix. I almost dropped the paper because I had never seen, let alone handled, a classified document. It read: ‘Wear civilian clothes. At the Phoenix train station you’ll see a black sedan at the curb. Ask the driver if he is waiting for Mr. Brown.’ There was no money nor a ticket from Washington to Baltimore. Once again I felt like I was being tested on how I would respond,” recalled Brucker.¹⁸

At the Greyhound bus station, T/4 Brucker hid his civilian clothes. Claiming that he had been mugged (his excuse for wearing a disheveled khaki uniform) and had to get to Baltimore, a sympathetic passenger bought him a bus ticket. When he got to the train station in Baltimore, he dressed in his civilian suit with his Army belt and brogans and ditched his uniform and musette bag. He asked for the track of the train going to Phoenix. Not realizing that the Baltimore station had two levels of tracks (express and local), he got on an express that went by Phoenix without stopping. A friendly conductor marked his ticket, told him to get off in York, Pennsylvania, go back to Baltimore, and take the local to Phoenix. Perseverance finally got him to Phoenix, Maryland, shortly after midnight. Needless to say, there was no black car waiting at the station. Sleeping on an outside bench had unforeseen consequences.¹⁹

At daybreak, Brucker went to the village post office (public telephones are available in French postal offices) to find a telephone, but was directed to the nearby hardware store. His collect call to Ingersoll resulted in a one-way conversation: “Get back to the train station now and stay there!!! A black sedan will pick you up.” Brucker did just that. Shortly a black sedan arrived. When he dutifully repeated his line, “Is this the car for Mr. Brown?” The reply was, “Get the hell in here,” and off they roared. En route his two Army officer escorts told him about a “game” played in the school. Everyone had to “zero in” on one fellow and collect all the information he could about him. “Obviously, you’re military by your Army brogans and belt,” they said. “You’ve got to do something about

them. It’s like wearing a sign.”²⁰

When they arrived at “The Farm,” instead of being given something to eat, Brucker was sent to an ongoing lock picking class. “No one said a word to me when I showed up. But, everyone kept staring at me. I didn’t figure it out until I glanced in the wash-room mirror just before lunch. I was covered with coal soot from head to toe—the price of sleeping at the train station—a heavy coat of soot had accumulated from the trains passing by all night. Thus, I made my OSS debut looking like the popular Al Jolson in black grease paint except I couldn’t sing, ‘Maamie, how I love ya, how I love ya . . .,’” chuckled Brucker.²¹



Al Jolson in the 1927 movie The Jazz Singer.

Because most OSS SO training was conducted on “The Farm” and only the practical aspects done in Baltimore, the trainees were housed on the grounds. Two men shared a pyramid tent with plywood sides and floor in August and September 1943. At the Farm they practiced surveillance, learned to sketch observations, practiced memorization techniques, did simple interrogations, received basic demolitions training from Army combat engineers, and prepared false documents—from birth certificates to draft deferments and marriage papers. They were taught hand-to-hand combat, knife fighting, and two-handed instinctive pistol marksmanship by British Major William E. Fairbairn, a retired Shanghai deputy police commissioner.²²

Instinctive pistol shooting skills were honed in Fairbairn’s “house of horrors” almost daily. Trainees armed with their .45 cal Colt automatic pistol and carrying two six-round magazines had to enter the darkened building with Fairbairn at their shoulder. As they negotiated narrow dark passages, spring-activated cardboard German soldiers popped up in rooms, from behind walls, and around corners. Trainees engaged the targets and Fairbairn critiqued reaction times and shooting accuracy.²³ “It was a nerve-wracking drill that most dreaded. I don’t know which was scarier—the spook house or Fairbairn—but it later paid off for me,” said Brucker.²⁴ Off-site practical training was not as stressful.

Off-duty police detectives served as instructors for surveillance missions in downtown Baltimore. While that training was realistic, any “cloak and dagger” aspect was lost when all the teams had to rendezvous at the bus station for their ride back to the Farm. “There was nothing more ridiculous than thirty guys hanging around doing their best to be inconspicuous and ignoring one another, and then all getting on the same bus,” said Brucker. “But, we were preparing for the three pass/fail SO tasks.”²⁵

Two individual tests and one two-man team exercise in Baltimore evaluated clandestine operating skills. The “singleton” missions merely required obtaining employ-

OSS Assessments



OSS Assessment: The Ball and Spiral Test.



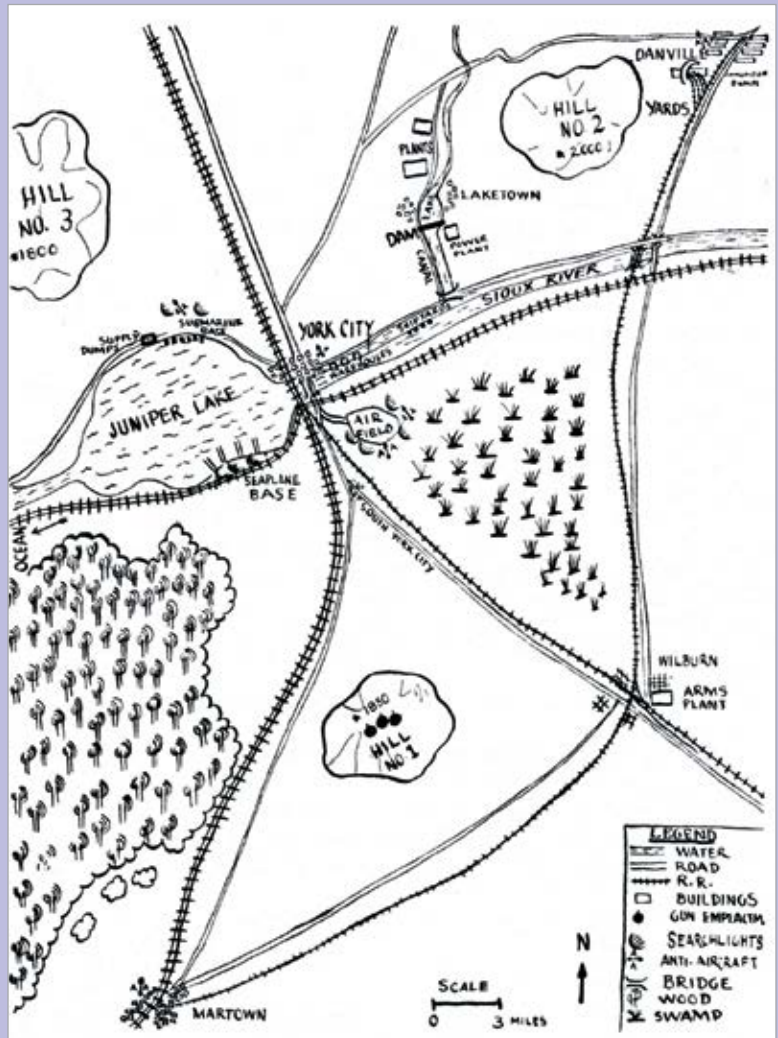
OSS Assessment: Major Fairbairn's "House of Horrors."



OSS Assessment: Constructing a rope bridge.



OSS Assessment: Getting a team over two walls with only a board.



OSS Assessment: Map Memory Test.

ment—one without documents and the other with false papers—not actually working. Two-man teams were to infiltrate factories, preferably sensitive factories making war materials that had armed guards. The team had to escape without being detected. City boarding houses (“flop houses”) filled with transient workers that had responded to the war manufacturing boom and commensurate good salaries were good places to “obtain” unguarded working papers and documents, especially during family-style evening meals and while residents used communal bathroom facilities.²⁶

Merchant seamen from torpedoed vessels were common. In Baltimore, they rarely had papers. And, newspapers reported the names of ships recently sunk by German submarines operating off the Atlantic coast. Thus, Brucker, claiming that he had shipped out from Boston and been torpedoed, had no trouble getting hired at a radio manufacturing plant since new papers were “being sent” to him in Baltimore. After paying fifty cents for a night’s lodging, he managed to “borrow” documents and a cap at a flop house and get another job. According to Brucker, “Employment was a ‘piece of cake.’”²⁷ The last test—the two-man infiltration—was tougher.

Infiltrating and escaping undetected from the Baltimore Shipyard proved more difficult. Brucker and his assigned partner did a reconnaissance and installed themselves in a blue-collar bar, the Silver Dollar, just outside the main entrance. From there they could observe the workers entering and leaving and the security guard routine. Observing shift changes over several drafts of beer, the two formulated their plan. The late afternoon influx seemed best. Day guards were complacent because their rotation was due. And, since the largest work shift was daytime, the mass exodus of workers offered good cover because the night shift had to fight the larger outgoing tide to get inside. Blending into two of the initial groups of night workers, Brucker and his partner grabbed time cards from their slots, “punched in,” and moved inside. Then, they assumed the role of janitors by simply picking up brooms and dustpans and proceeding to sweep up debris. The two “janitors” moved unnoticed as they worked throughout the plant to determine their means of escape. Shortly after midnight the pair headed to the darkest section of the fence pushing a wheelbarrow and carrying shovels. While one kept lookout, the other dug a shallow trench under the fence. Then, the two scooted under the fence, filled in the escape route, and discarded their shovels as they split up to escape. They had gotten in and out of the shipyard without a hitch. The final task for each was to buy a bottle of liquor—the requisite “ticket” to board the bus back to the Farm.²⁸

The bottle of liquor was required for the SO “graduation” party the next evening. That was the final test. Everyone that had successfully passed the previous evaluations assembled in the great room of the farmhouse with their bottle of liquor. Unfamiliar with American whiskey, Brucker had bought a bottle of *Southern Comfort*. Early in their training, everyone had been told to focus on

another trainee and learn all they could about him. Now it was the time to reveal in turn what they had discovered and get the “facts” substantiated.²⁹

The finalists were seated on the floor in a circle with their liquor bottle in front of them. Instead of these “Indians” smoking the peace pipe in turn, ritual “belts” of liquor had to be taken by each man before presenting his “findings.” The drinking was to “loosen tongues” to see what else the trainees would reveal. The man who focused on Brucker was close on only two things: that Herbert E-54 was European, based on the way he flicked his cigarette ash when smoking—by tapping the top of the cigarette with one finger; American men used their little finger to flick the ash; and surreptitious rifling of E-54’s personal things led to the discovery of a Free French Navy shoulder epaulet (souvenir from a sailor while on his clothes-buying expedition in New York)—proof that he was French. This time Brucker’s U.S. citizenship saved him from expulsion, but it was not enough to keep him, *Southern Comfort*, and “Ralph” from embracing the toilet later.³⁰

But, the revelations made an impression on Brucker. He realized that he had to be more careful in the future. Those that “graduated” from the OSS SO course were given a set of lock picks (which they were told were illegal to carry) as a present and told to pack their equipment and prepare to go overseas. Herbert E-54 was told to report back to Mr. Ingersoll in Washington. When he returned to the nation’s capital, Brucker was issued complete battle gear—from weapons to helmet and gas mask. Overseas orders would come directly. On the way to the OSS “safehouse,” Herbert E-54 stopped to look at some movie posters.³¹

Unbeknownst to him, a soldier in full-battle dress and wearing a .45 Colt automatic was an uncommon sight in Washington. Thus, while looking at theater movie posters trying to decide which movie to see, Herbert E-54 was apprehended by a Military Police patrol and taken to the station.³² That proved to be quite an experience for all concerned.

T/4 Brucker explained that he was awaiting orders for overseas. He was armed with his .45 cal Colt automatic and homemade dagger. This got the MPs really excited, even more so when E-54 proceeded to show them that the gun was loaded—an OSS requirement—as he surrendered it. Then, he asked if they wanted his other weapon . . . a shoulder-holstered Hungarian .32 cal pistol under his tunic. It required calling Mr. Ingersoll to keep him out of jail. The final agreement was that the MPs would hold all of his weapons until he shipped out. Amazingly, Brucker and all of his weapons were in a truck headed for New York (the port of debarkation for Europe-bound troopships) early the next morning. “It was quite a night, but I got to see the movie, *Sahara*, a World War II adventure film starring Humphrey Bogart,” laughed Brucker.³³

This article chronicled the early life of Herbert R. Brucker, his pre-WWII military service, and his assessment and training by the OSS. It took him from being

a telegrapher Private in the Radio Section, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division before Pearl Harbor to service as a signal cadre man (CW) training signalmen of the 76th and 100th Infantry Divisions from 1942–1943, where he rose to the grade of Staff Sergeant. It was his upbringing in France and Germany for seventeen years and languages that attracted OSS interest. This led to assessment and training as a Special Operations operative while an Army Technical Sergeant Fourth Class. The description of OSS training by Brucker is very down-to-earth and erodes some mythology and romanticism that have grown up over the years. Being a Frenchman with American citizenship was the key to being selected for OSS training and why Brucker was detailed to the SOE in England.

It would not be until he was detailed to Britain's Special Operations Executive and underwent their training that Brucker realized how shallow OSS training for combat really was. See "The Failures of Detachment 101 (Burma) and Its Evolution into a Combined Arms Team" in this issue. Part III will cover Major Herbert R. Brucker's SOE training in England. It will end with his jump into occupied France in May 1944 to replace a team "rolled up" by the Gestapo shortly after capturing a female Hindu radio operator, Noor Inayat Kahn, "Madelaine" of the SOE Prosper Circuit.³⁴ ♣

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Endnotes

- 1 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 November 2005, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 2; Herbert Brucker, biographical summary (undated), USASOC History Office Classified Files; Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 3 July 2006, Fayetteville, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 6.
- 2 Brucker interview 2; Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 12 July 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, hereafter Brucker interview 7.

- 3 Brucker interview 2; Brucker received his first serial number at the Parisian boarding school: HB25; Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 30 May 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 5.
- 4 Brucker interview 2.
- 5 Brucker interview 2.
- 6 Brucker interview 2; Christopher R. Gabel, *The U.S. Army GHQ HQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History), 15.
- 7 Brucker interview 2.
- 8 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 August 2006, Fayetteville, NC, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 8.
- 9 Brucker interview 2.
- 10 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 November 2005, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 1 and Brucker interviews 2 and 5.
- 11 Brucker interview 2.
- 12 Brucker interviews 1 and 3.
- 13 Brucker interview 2.
- 14 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 27 March 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 4; OSS Letter of Receipt, George F. Ingersoll to Douglas Dimond, dated 14 September 1943, Herbert R. Brucker's personal files, Fayetteville, NC; Brucker interviews 1 and 3.
- 15 Brucker interviews 1 and 3.
- 16 Brucker interview 3.
- 17 Brucker interviews 3 and 7.
- 18 Brucker interview 3.
- 19 Brucker interview 3.
- 20 Brucker interview 3.
- 21 Brucker interview 3.
- 22 Brucker interviews 3 and 6. William E. Fairbairn and colleague Eric Sykes designed the Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife carried by British Commandos, OSS operatives, and the Canadian-American First Special Service Force.
- 23 Lieutenant Colonel Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs, Perseus Books, 2005), 49.
- 24 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 25 Brucker interview 3.
- 26 Brucker interview 3.
- 27 Brucker interview 3.
- 28 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 29 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 30 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 31 Brucker interview 3.
- 32 Brucker interview 3.
- 33 Brucker interview 3.
- 34 Brucker interview 8.

The Failures of Detachment 101

and its Evolution into a Combined Arms Team

By Troy J. Sacquety

IN the lore of Army Special Operations, Detachment 101 of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) has reached near-mythical stature. The Detachment succeeded in racking up an impressive record. By the end of the war, it had been credited with at least 5,500 enemy killed, at the cost of some 200 American and indigenous personnel. However, Detachment 101's early long-range operations in 1942 and 1943 were largely unsuccessful. These early missions were almost all total disasters. A lack of experience and poor intelligence were ignored by the commanding officer of Detachment 101, Lieutenant Colonel Carl Eifler, in his eagerness to show the value of his organization to Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell, commanding general of the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater. The majority of all Detachment 101 failures—agents captured and killed—took place between March and October of 1943. At the end of 1943, only one long-range penetration operation had succeeded out of six overlapping missions. In operations of this type, "failure" equated to the loss of the entire team.

The failed long-range penetration operations in 1943 claimed the lives of more than a dozen agents—Detachment 101's most valuable assets. Just as in Burma during World War II, Korea in the early 1950s, Vietnam, and Iraq and Afghanistan today, the most valuable commodity in special operations is the highly trained operative. The following article will discuss the first three long-range penetration missions of Detachment 101: "A" Group, "B" Group, and "W" Group. These missions provided some of the earliest operational experiences for the unit. While, with the exception of "A" Group, the others were complete failures, all yielded valuable lessons that determined how future missions would be conducted. These lessons remain applicable now. Burma of 1943 had many of same problems found on America's battlegrounds today: an unfamiliar

operating environment, poor area intelligence with few human intelligence sources, and commanders eager to conduct operations before their units are prepared.

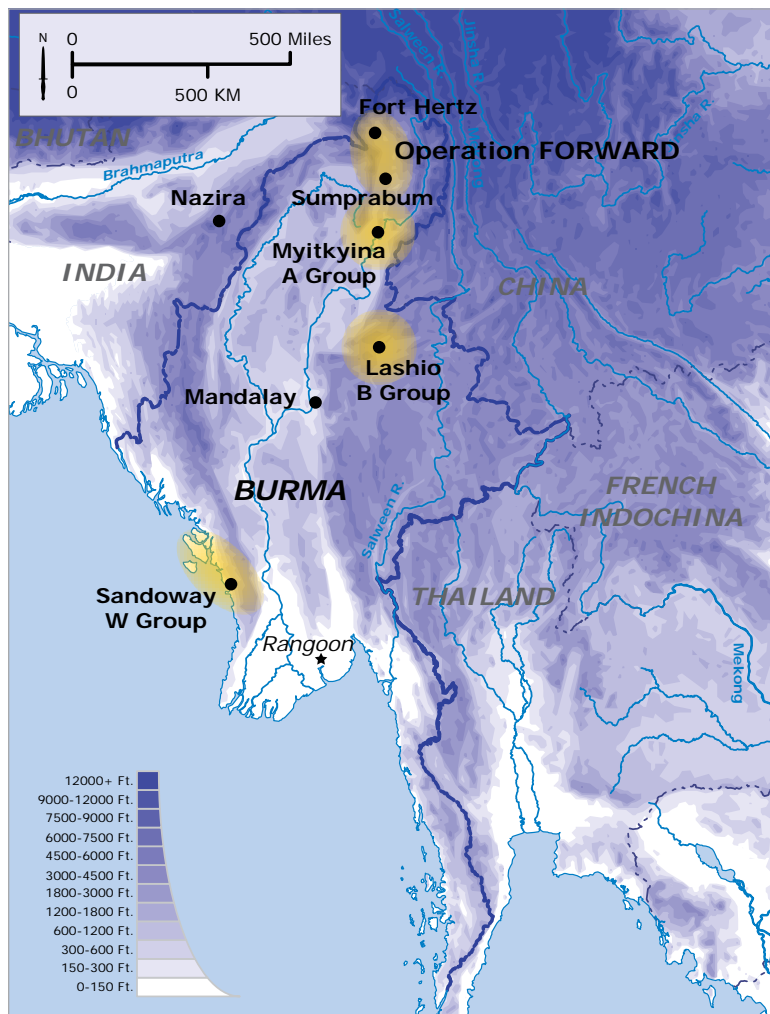
Detachment 101 was formed in early 1942 by the Coordinator of Information (COI), the predecessor of the OSS. General William J. Donovan, the head of the COI and later the OSS, envisioned Detachment 101 as a unit organized and equipped to conduct sabotage behind enemy lines. That its sole mission would be sabotage was anathema for conventional military officers at the time and met much resistance. Many senior Army officers saw little utility in such a unit, and were reluctant to have OSS units operating in their wartime areas. Detachment 101 became the first OSS operational unit in America's war effort.¹ While OSS personnel were operating in North Africa in support of Operation TORCH, they were not engaged in full-scale combat operations. That's where Detachment 101 was different.²

General Stilwell, however, was more receptive to an

Colonel Carl F. Eifler was the original commanding officer of Detachment 101 and the driving force behind the unit until early 1944.

The Commanding General of the China-Burma-India Theater was General Joseph Stilwell. (Photograph given to Colonel Ray Peers.)





Map of Detachment 101's area of operations in Burma highlights the predominant mountainous terrain.

OSS presence. In one way, he had little choice. In January 1942, Malaya fell to the Japanese, and the British surrendered Singapore a month later. Having simultaneously occupied Thailand, the Japanese invaded Burma in late January 1942. By May, the Allied forces were in full retreat from Burma. Less than a month after his arrival, Stilwell led his staff out of Burma on foot. Upon reaching India, he declared shamefully, "We got run out of Burma, and it's humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back, and retake Burma."³ Furthermore, the CBI was not a priority. It was so resource starved that General Stilwell only "commanded" a smattering of American aviation units, and some poorly led and equipped Chinese troops that had been sent to protect the Burma road—the Allied lifeline that supplied China. Not only did he not have any American ground troops, the only Allied intelligence unit in his area of responsibility was the British-led "V-Force" in northern Burma.

While reluctant, Stilwell agreed to give Detachment 101 a chance to prove its value, in part because Eifler had served with him before the war. After receiving some very compressed training in OSS methods, Eifler and his twenty men arrived in India. These men had technical skills like communications, medical, and explosives. Not one of them had any combat experience, but they were highly motivated, willing, and eager to take the

V-Force

IN April 1942, the British forces in Burma were crumbling under the Japanese onslaught. At that time General Sir Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, India, ordered the creation of a guerrilla element to attack enemy lines of communication should the Japanese decide to continue their advance from Burma into the Assam region of India.¹ This group, recruited from the Assam Rifles, Burmese Rifles, Kachin Rifles, hill tribesman, former British tea plantation owners and workers in the territorial guard, and some detailed American servicemen, came to be known as V-Force.² Since the Japanese did not elect to invade further west until 1944, the unit mission became primarily intelligence gathering, weather reporting, and pilot rescue. They did this by maintaining a chain of forward observation posts from upper Assam to the northern Arakan. They provided protection for the Tenth Air Force and Royal Air Force air warning outposts while also serving to maintain an Allied presence in the forward areas. This was important to the pro-British native groups who were suffering under the Japanese occupation. In February 1944, Stilwell requested that the American personnel in V-Force be transferred to Detachment 101. The experience that these veterans brought was a boon to the organization and immediately improved operations, especially when Detachment 101 was ramping up to assist the drive on Myitkyina by Merrill's Marauders.³

- 1 Julian Thompson, *The Imperial War Museum Book of War Behind Enemy Lines* (Washington DC: Brassey's Inc. 1998), 383.
- 2 Peter Lutkin, *V-Force and OSS Detachment 101*, interview by Troy J. Sacquety, circa September 2005, notes, author's personal possession.
- 3 The memoirs on V-Force are surprisingly many. Included among these are: Ursula Graham Bower, *Naga Path*, C.E. Lucas Phillips, *The Raiders of Arakan* (London: Heinemann, 1971), and John Bowen, *Undercover in the Jungle* (London: William Kimber, 1978). For V-Force support to American Air Warning Stations, please see Bob Phillips, *KC8 Burma: CBI Air Warning Team, 1941–1942* (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1992).

The cap badge of V Force was a letter "V" superimposed on two crossed Fairbairn-Sykes daggers resting on a scroll that says "Force."



Force 136: SOE in the Far East

THE Special Operations Executive, or SOE, was roughly the British equivalent to OSS. It was formed in August 1940 as a clandestine paramilitary organization to conduct sabotage and subversion.¹ Prime Minister Winston Churchill intended SOE to “set Europe ablaze.”² A branch of SOE, referred to as Force 136 after February 1944, was the section responsible for sabotage and subversion in the Far East.³ Lieutenant Colonel Eifler knew that he needed all the help possible to get Detachment 101 actively involved in Burma. Thus, soon after his arrival, Eifler contacted Colin MacKenzie, the head of SOE in India on 20 June 1942. Major Wallace Richmond was appointed the SOE liaison officer to Detachment 101.⁴ Through Richmond, who had years of experience in pre-war Burma, Detachment 101 was able to recruit members for “A,” “B,” and “W” Groups.

1 F.H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War; Its Influence in Strategy and Operations*, Vol. I. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1986), 278. For more on SOE (Special Operations Executive), the reader can peruse the other volumes, under the same name, of this series.

2 Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency* (Washington DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1981), 162.

3 A reader interested in learning more about SOE/Force 136 would do well to consult Charles Cruickshank, *SOE: Special Operations Executive in the Far East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

4 Major Carl Eifler, “Report of Action to Date and Request for Instructions,” to Colonel William J. Donovan, November 24, 1942, Folder 49, Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226, National Archives II, College Park, MD, 17–18.

war to the Japanese. It was a group in search of a mission with no clear idea of where it would conduct operations against the Axis enemy. The general consensus was that once they got into theater, they would find a place from which to operate and to work out their methods of sabotaging the enemy.

With Stilwell's concurrence, Eifler went first to China, where the COI originally envisioned that the Detachment would operate. It quickly became obvious that Detachment 101 could not conduct independent operations in China, something Stilwell already knew. Eifler then returned to India. Stilwell decided to give Detachment 101 an opportunity in Burma. His initial guidance to Eifler was “that he wanted to hear booms coming out of the jungle.”⁴ Eifler interpreted this to mean that Detachment 101 would have a brief window of opportunity—actually ninety days—to demonstrate its value to Stilwell.⁵ This was a tough order for a 21-man unit that had just been created and where the operational environment was totally unfamiliar. The challenge was fraught with disaster, but Eifler was determined to try.⁶

Eifler still had to work out an arrangement with the British, who had overall operational control of Burma. It was a lost British colony—and one that they desperately wanted back. The British viewed Detachment 101 with mixed emotions. The Detachment, if successful,

would put some “teeth” in the American effort in northern Burma. In 1942, the U.S. effort in the CBI focused on the “Hump” airlift route—which the British regarded as a wasteful effort. They did not share Stilwell's belief that the Chinese could provide effective combat forces if they had strong leadership.

On 20 June 1942, Eifler met with Colin Mackenzie, Special Operations Executive (SOE) commander in India.⁷ Eifler briefed Mackenzie on his proposed operational plan and addressed two potential points of concern. Both were amicably settled: first, SOE would have priority in recruiting personnel; second, a liaison arrangement was worked out so that the two organizations were not tripping over each other by conducting similar operations in the same areas.⁸ Mackenzie assigned Major Wally Richmond as Eifler's liaison officer. It was Richmond's responsibility to keep the Burma government-in-exile informed of the actions of both SOE and OSS.⁹ The two also decided that Detachment 101 would retain its autonomy which had been in doubt as Washington had not wanted to “ruffle London's feathers” unnecessarily over this small group.¹⁰

Once they had settled operational matters concerning Burma, Detachment 101 established its base in Nazira, India. There, it set up a training area and a hub for logistics and communications. Simultaneously, the commander and operations staff began to plan missions. The first operation was a short-range mission. In late 1942, the only Allied controlled area was the small outpost of Fort Hertz (now Putao) in northern Burma. In late December 1942, a small group of Detachment 101 personnel moved to Fort Hertz to conduct what would later be named Operation FORWARD. From here, they moved to Sumprabum, near Japanese lines. FORWARD—reinforced with a few Anglo-Burman and Kachin recruits—was to relay intelligence, identify potential bombing targets, report weather conditions, and conduct very limited combat operations against local Japanese forces. FORWARD proved to be a success and further shallow penetrations were made into Japanese controlled areas. In April 1943, the “L,” “M,” and “J” agent groups went overland into Burma on intelligence-gathering operations. In August, KNOTHEAD—similar in scope to FORWARD—was established. These missions supplied a constant stream of tactical intelligence back to Nazira. From FORWARD and KNOTHEAD, Detachment 101 also began to recruit the native Kachins for guerilla operations.

While it would be the short-range missions that proved the value of Detachment 101, only long-range penetrations would give Stilwell the “booms” that he wanted within the allotted ninety days. Hence, multiple long-range missions were launched at the same time as the short-range operations. The emphasis was on getting as many groups into the field as quickly as possible. This placed great stress on the inexperienced and overworked staff. All of the personnel in the Detachment had multiple jobs and faced a herculean task in accomplishing them all well. This problem was further compounded by

poor to nonexistent area intelligence, and poorly trained operators who were selected—not trained—to fit the mission. While there was a frenzy of effort in the Detachment, it did not necessarily equate to a well-planned operation.

The first long-range sabotage mission launched by Detachment 101 was “A” Group.¹¹ This mission created a false sense of operational preparedness which was subsequently eroded by the deeper penetration operations. The “A” Group mission was pure sabotage. It was to disrupt Japanese air operations from Myitkyina by cutting rail lines and blowing bridges south of the city.¹² Japanese fighter aircraft based at the Myitkyina airdrome were plaguing American efforts to supply Chinese forces via the “Hump” airlift route. This same airfield became the May 1944 objective of Merrill’s Marauders.

“A” Group was composed exclusively of British Commonwealth personnel. The leader was Jack Barnard. Oscar Milton, Patrick Maddox, Pat Quinn, John Beamish, Aram “Bunny” Aganoor, Dennis Francis, and Saw Egbert Timothy were the other operators. Four Kachin natives—Ah Khi, Ahdi Yaw Yin, Yaw Yin Naung, and Lazum Naw—accompanied the group.¹³ Most of the “A” Group personnel had worked in the timber or mining industries of Burma for years.¹⁴ Eifler recruited them with the help of Colonel Richmond, the British liaison officer, who knew many of the men personally.¹⁵ Most had prior military service. Jack Barnard, John Beamish, and Pat Maddox came from SOE, while Oscar Milton was on loan from the Burma Army. Many of the “A” Group had made the grueling walk-out of Burma with remnants of the Chinese Army in 1942. It was their experience that gave “A” Group members the necessary skills to survive—and operate—hundreds of miles behind Japanese lines: knowledge of the terrain, environment, peoples, and culture, as well as critical language skills.

The first major task for “A” Group was a successful infiltration. The initial plan called for the group to move overland into their operating area from Fort Hertz, where FORWARD was getting settled. However, the group found this impossible. Security was too lax



To conduct its particular form of guerilla warfare, Detachment 101 had to rely upon native troops such as these Kachins.

Kachins

IN northern Burma the Kachins were the primary tribal group and were staunchly pro-British. They also hated the collaborationist Burmese and other tribal groups in the south. Having borne the brunt of excesses committed by the Japanese, they were more than willing to support the Allies against them. The Kachins also had a true affection for Americans because they were not a colonial power with post-war designs on Burma, and they did not act superior. The Kachins had enjoyed a decades-long relationship with American Christian missionaries in the northern hill country who had transposed their tongue—Jingpaw—into a written language.

After 1943, Detachment 101 concentrated its efforts in northern Burma. The Kachins dominated the guerilla recruits and were praised for their dedication and warrior mentality. The Kachins earned such a reputation that the “behind-the-lines” groups were called “Jingpaw” Rangers. Jingpaw is the name of the largest group that makes up the Kachin culture, and is the word that they use when referring to themselves as a group. It was not until the end of the war that the indigenous populations in the south—primarily the Burmese ethnic group—began to help the Allies to any degree. They were the opportunists—the Kachins were the staunch Allied loyalists.¹

1 For an account of Burmese National Army leader and representative of the Burmese Anti-Fascist League, Aung San, and his approach to the British, see Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942–1945* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 515–20.



The Burma Campaign bar was originally intended for the Kachins, but the Americans of Detachment 101 also wore the bar. Technical Sergeant Fifth Class Oscar Klein wore this sterling silver bar.

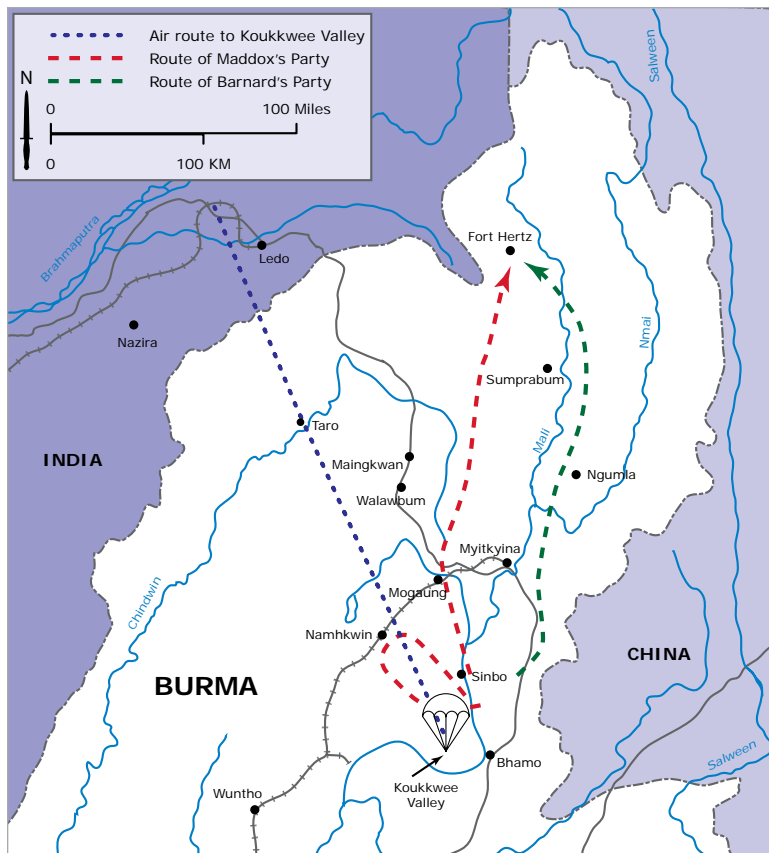
Late in the war, Detachment 101 adopted the insignia above. This was a locally-made patch worn by Technical Sergeant Fifth Class Samuel Spector.



From left to right are three of the "A" Group members: Jack Barnard, Oscar Milton, and Pat Maddox. "A" Group was the first long-range penetration sabotage mission of Detachment 101 and that of the OSS as a whole.



John Beamish of "A" Group stands in the door of the C-87 drop aircraft as Lieutenant Colonel John Coughlin, Detachment 101's Executive Officer, looks out.



Map of "A" Group travels.

and the British officer in charge of the area, a Colonel Gamble, was less than helpful.¹⁶ It was Gamble's poor operations security that convinced Eifler that the Japanese would discover that a clandestine group—accompanied by Kachin porters—was trying to infiltrate. Eifler then decided to parachute the group behind the lines. After several hours of ground instruction, the group was deemed ready to jump. On 5 February 1942, Barnard accompanied an aerial reconnaissance mission to review the drop zone. Two days later, Barnard and Saw parachuted in safely, although their radio was destroyed in the drop. The remainder of the team dropped in the next day after confirming that the recognition panels indicated the area was safe.¹⁷ Despite this being the first jump for the group, all landed without mishap.

"A" Group quickly set to its mission of destroying three railroad bridges. After creating a rally point where the teams would rendezvous for the walk-out once their bridges were blown, "A" Group split up.¹⁸ Oscar, Saw, and the four Kachins stayed at the rally point. The others began their 40-mile march south. Near their targets, the three teams split up and moved to their respective bridges. Maddox and Francis went to the Namhkwin bridge, Quinn and Aganoor headed for a smaller bridge two miles south of the Namhkwin bridge, and Barnard and Beamish moved to the Dagwin bridge. Everything appeared to be going well. The three teams got to their objectives unseen on the night of 23 February 1943. Once there, they prepared their demolitions for timed, simultaneous explosions.

However, Maddox and Francis, plagued by faulty timers, dropped the Namhkwin bridge too early. The prema-

ture explosion jeopardized the other teams' efforts. Barnard and Beamish abandoned their mission. Pat and Aganoor were discovered while placing their charges. They fired on local police who came to investigate. Soon, the police and local Japanese occupation troops were in pursuit. Quinn and Aganoor split up to increase their chances of escape. Both intended to independently work their way back to the rally point. Pat escaped but Aganoor was captured and presumably killed.

Unbeknownst to the OSS, the first Chindit operation—a large long-range penetration raid led by British Major General Orde Wingate—was also operating nearby.¹⁹ Because the Japanese presumed the bridge demolition missions were connected to the Chindits, they did not expand the search for the scattered teams. This time the OSS benefited from the local confusion.

Barnard and Beamish made it to the rendezvous camp on 24 February, after speed marching forty miles in less than a day. They thought that the other two groups had been captured or killed, and that Japanese forces were in close pursuit. Without pausing to rest, Barnard, Beamish, Oscar, Saw, and the Kachins gathered what supplies they could carry and beat a hasty retreat. Maddox and Francis arrived on 27 February and Quinn showed up the next day. From here, Maddox, Francis, and Quinn—minus Aganoor—started their trek north back to Fort Hertz. By then "A" Group had been behind enemy lines for twenty days.

Despite the fact that "A" Group was still behind enemy lines, Eifler felt pressured to launch additional—and more ambitious—operations. Thus, the second sabotage mission, code-named "B" Group, was launched while "A" Group was still south of Myitkyina. "B" Group parachuted in near Lawksawk, further south of "A" Group, during daylight on 24 February 1943. "B" Group, led by Harry Ballard, was comprised of John Clark, Vierap Pillay, Lionel Cornelius, Kenneth Murray, and Cyril Goodwin. All were either Anglo-Burmans or Anglo-Indians recruited from Burmese refugee camps in India.²⁰

Major William Ray Peers, Eifler's

Operation LONGCLOTH

The First Chindit Expedition

THE Chindits—named after the chinthe, a mythical lion-like statue that guards every Buddhist temple in Burma—were the brainchild of the unorthodox Major General Orde Wingate, the World War II Lawrence of Arabia. After leading the successful guerrilla force that restored Emperor Haile Selassie to power in Ethiopia, Wingate was brought to India to create a special force in the Far East. His long-range penetration unit was built around the 77th Indian Brigade. This unit was far from ideal and was a motley collection of Commando volunteers, two colonial battalions, and the rear echelon 13th King's (Liverpool) Regiment, in which the average age was 33.¹

Wingate broke his nearly 3,000-man brigade into seven separate columns. These columns then independently marched overland into Burma in February 1943. They were supplied entirely by air and converged on an area south of Myitkyina. Here they attacked Japanese elements and sabotaged infrastructure. In late March, Wingate ordered the columns to "bomb-shell" or disperse into small elements, and make their way back out of Burma. Groups trickled in until May. Casualties—some 900 killed or missing in action—were high because any man who could not walk had to be left behind. It was strictly a harassment and interdiction effort. However, it did serve to raise the morale of a mentally defeated British Army in India by proving that the ordinary British soldier—like those who surrendered at Singapore and were driven out of Burma in a rout—could fight the Japanese in the jungle and survive to do so again. It also proved that a large force operating in the jungles of Burma could be entirely resupplied by air and spurred the U.S. Army Air Forces to create the 1st Air Commando to support other special operations units in the CBI.

1 Julian Thompson, *The Imperial War Museum Book of War Behind Enemy Lines* (Washington DC: Brassey's Inc. 1998), 140.



The shoulder patch adopted by the Chindits was a chinthe guarding a Burmese pagoda.



Seen here in 1944 wearing his characteristic pith helmet, Major General Orde Wingate discusses plans with Colonel Philip Cochran of the U.S. 1st Air Commando.



Technical Sergeant Fifth Class George Stanford, a member of Detachment 101, saved this amazing sequence of photos of "B" Group. Here is the complement of "B" Group prior to their jump into Japanese occupied Burma. Their leader Harry W. Ballard, is second from left. The entire group was soon captured and killed by the Japanese.



The C-87 drop aircraft for "B" Group was escorted by a flight of P-40 fighters, one of which is seen here. Since "B" Group was dropped far into Japanese territory, notice the drop tank that increased the range of the P-40. Lieutenant Colonel John Allison led the escorts. Colonel Phillip Cochran and Allison later formed the 1st Air Commando Group.



"B" Group is seen here aboard their C-87 drop aircraft.



"Billy" (Vierap Pil-lay) was the first member of "B" Group to jump. He is standing next to Lieutenant Colonel John Coughlin, the Executive Officer for Detachment 101.



The second man, Kenneth Murray, of the stick exits the aircraft.



Lieutenant Colonel John Coughlin motions for the third man, Lionel Cornelius, of "B" Group to jump.



After all the men have jumped, the C-87 circled back to drop equipment and supplies. One of the men remaining on the drop plane took this photograph of "B" Group personnel floating down into Japanese occupied Burma. This was the last time that Detachment 101 ever saw "B" Group.



Major Ray Peers was the third in the chain of command in Detachment 101 until early 1944. He rose to the rank of Colonel during the war and was the group's final commanding officer. He retired after thirty-six years of military service with the rank of Lieutenant General.

number three, was part of the drop crew on the aircraft. In his book, *Behind the Burma Road*, Peers explained his misgivings about the selected drop zone because it was only a few miles from several villages and the aircraft would be easily noticed. However, assured by Ballard that the group would be fine, Peers approved the parachute drop.²¹ Never again would the mission leader have the authority to make the decision to execute. The Detachment 101 staff correctly concluded that a leader, primed by adrenaline to go, could not be relied on to make an objective assessment when immediate risk had escalated.²²

Lawksawk was out of the range of Allied fighters based in India. Therefore a China-based Army Air Forces C-87 and P-40 fighter escort had to be used.²³ In early 1943, Detachment 101 had only the Army Air Forces for air support. General Stilwell's priority—and hence that of the Tenth Air Force—was to fly as much cargo as possible into China over the Himalayan "Hump" route. Thus, the request for a single cargo plane had to go through Tenth Air Force command channels to General Clayton Bissell before it reached Stilwell.²⁴ Stilwell denied the request while it was being processed by the Tenth Air Force because he wanted Detachment 101 to infiltrate groups overland to avoid taxing his limited airlift. Eifler pointed out that "A" Group had demonstrated that this was not always practical. Stilwell relented when Eifler said that the entire mission—reconnaissance, personnel, and supply drop—could be done with a single mission.²⁵ Eifler also agreed to bomb Lashio on the return flight. His supply bundle kickers would manhandle twenty 30-pound



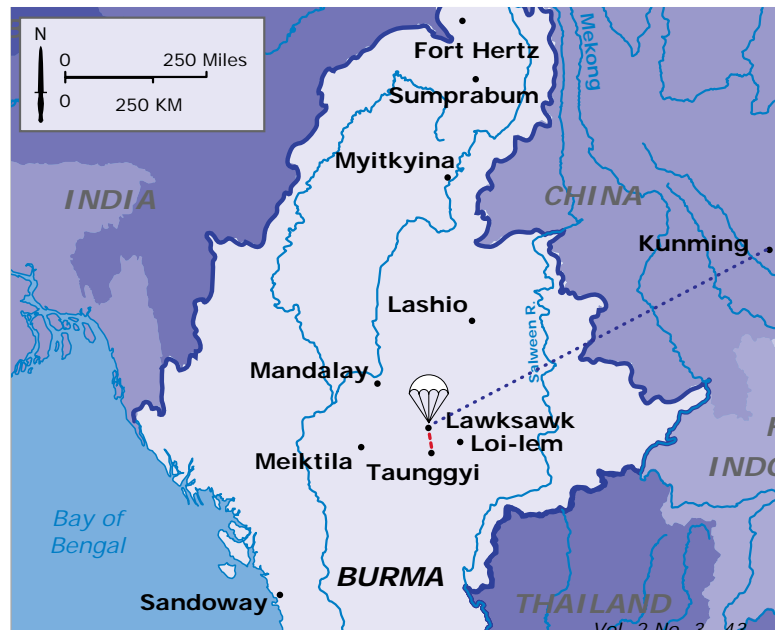
The C-87, as seen above, is the designation given to the cargo version of the B-24 bomber.

bombs out of the aircraft over the Lashio airfield to disrupt Japanese air operations.²⁶ The lack of prior reconnaissance alone proved fatal for "B" Group.

"B" Group was launched on 24 February to add to the "booms" that "A" Group was supposedly already making in Burma. Twenty minutes from the drop zone, the men of "B" Group were offered the traditional British brandy-laced coffee. At 1530 hours, they jumped. All landed safely although Goodwin was hung up in a tree. As the cargo and escort planes circled overhead after the drop, one man waved goodbye.²⁷ Unfortunately, the men on the ground could not see what Peers saw from the C-87.

As we made our last pass, we could see a discomfiting sight: villagers streaming out in every direction, heading towards the drop zone. I had an aching feeling that the lines looked hostile. I couldn't get it out of my head that they were out to kill. And because of this, I felt it had been a bad decision. As I sat in the plane, I felt miserable about

Map of "B" Group travels.





Map of "W" group travels, showing the sea route taken from Chittagong, in present-day Bangladesh, to the amphibious insertion near Kyaukpyu.

To conduct the amphibious landing of "W" Group, at this stage of the war Detachment 101 had to rely upon the boats of the Indian Royal Navy. Here Lieutenant Colonel Eifler (right) talks with one of the ship's officers.



The rocky Burma coast proved to be an obstacle for landing the Detachment's "W" Group. Lieutenant Colonel Eifler was injured when the surf bashed his head upon a rock such as these.



*the whole affair and wondered why I had ever got mixed up in this sort of business.*²⁸

Yet, without pause for reflection as to what happened to "A" or "B" Groups, the long-range penetration missions continued to be launched. Lieutenant General Noel Mackintosh Stuart Irwin, commander of the British Eastern Army in the Arakan region of Burma, asked Detachment 101 for assistance in cutting the Japanese supply line on the Prome-Taungup coastal road. Any help that Detachment 101 could provide would aid him in recapturing Donbiak (Shinkhali).²⁹ Since the Arakan is principally a region of thick mangrove swamp along the west coast of Burma, "W" Group would have to be inserted by boat. The "W" Group would be operating even farther south than "A" or "B" Groups, well beyond Detachment 101's primary area of operations.

Detachment 101 was even less prepared for boat insertions than it was for those by air. It would be another first for Detachment 101. Unlike "A" Group, which received some parachute training, "W" Group would not get boat training. The Detachment had no organic boats, and the landing party from Detachment 101 also had no experience.³⁰ The Detachment would not be able to conduct successful small-boat operations until the Ceylon-based Detachment 404 Maritime Unit and Operations Group—later renamed the Detachment 101 Arakan Field Unit—started operating in the region in late 1944.

Detachment 101 had to rely upon the British Navy for boats.³¹ British Naval restrictions applied to "W" Group—"Operation MAURICE" to them. The operation would be on a tight schedule. The naval delivery vessels had to be clear of the area by daylight to avoid detection and possible attack by Japanese air and naval forces.³² The British boats carrying the team and its rubber boats could not carry sufficient fuel internally to support a night reconnaissance of the landing site the night before and return the next night to drop off the team. Eifler requested that extra fuel be carried on deck to extend the range of the delivery vessels. His request was denied because carrying fuel externally was against British Navy regulations. Eifler asked Vice Admiral Herbert Fitzherbert, the Royal Indian Navy Commander, for a waiver. The British admiral did not feel that there was any situation in the theater that warranted a violation of this regulation.³³

Anticipating that the mission could end in disaster, Eifler—who was to be a member of the landing party—wrote a blunt memo and gave it to Lieutenant Colonel John G. Coughlin, his second in command. He was to forward the note to OSS chief, General Donovan, if the detachment commander went missing because Eifler himself would lead the landing party.

In the event that we do not come back, I wish to use this report as a reason to Washington why you should have your own boats. . . . If I, at the present time, had my own boats, I would not even consider undertaking this project now. . . . As I stated earlier in this report to you, chances at the present time appear to be against us, but we are going ahead. . . . I do not feel that it is right to ask



The de Havilland Gypsy Moth in which Lieutenant Colonel Eifler flew General Donovan behind Japanese lines to visit the KNOTHEAD group. In the rear and at the controls of the airplane is Lieutenant Colonel Carl Eifler, commanding officer of Detachment 101. General William J. Donovan is in the front seat.

our men to take these unnecessary chances which become necessary in an attempt to coordinate or work with other agencies.³⁴

The "W" Group consisted of six Anglo-Burman/Indian agents: Charles Morrell, John Sheridan, Vincent Snadden, John Aikman, Alex D'Attaiades, and Geoffrey Willson.³⁵ Eifler and the team finally got ashore near Kyaukpyu, Burma, on the night of 8 March 1943. They had to move—and hide before daybreak—more than one thousand pounds of supplies.³⁶ It took five tries to find a good landing site. The "wild card" proved to be Eifler himself.

Because of the time lost in the previous landing attempts, Eifler did not think that the agents would have the time to bury the rafts before dawn. In order to reduce the chances of the agents being discovered, Eifler decided to accompany them and swim to the motor launch with the rubber boats in tow. After the six agents got ashore with their supplies, Eifler told them to get the stuff under cover. When he shook their hands in farewell, he warned them that if discovered, they were not to be taken alive.³⁷ That was the last time that "W" Group was seen by Detachment 101, but the drama was not over.

The pounding surf and darkness proved to be nearly insurmountable even for the brawny OSS colonel. As he struggled to drag the five rubber boats back through the surf, Eifler was thrown head first into a large rock. Dazed, he barely managed to tow the rafts back to the launch craft in time. He was so disoriented that he only found the motor launch when he heard the sound of the anchor chain being pulled up. It had taken so long to get the agents ashore that dawn was soon approaching: Eifler's luck held.³⁸

The "W" Group fiasco marked the beginning of the end of Eifler as the commander of Detachment 101. His head injury was severe. Neither prodigious amounts of alcohol nor self-medicating with morphine could dull the constant pain.³⁹ It would eventually prove to be the grounds to remove the brash colonel from command. General



Major General William J. Donovan was the head of the Office of Strategic Services. Here he is seen in 1945 talking with Colonel Ray Peers.

Donovan came in November 1943 to evaluate Eifler and Detachment 101. Despite Eifler's fearless piloting when he took Donovan behind enemy lines in a circa-1925 Gypsy Moth biplane to visit KNOTHEAD, the OSS chief ordered him to relinquish command for medical reasons and to return stateside to recover.⁴⁰

After the consecutive long-range penetration failures by "B" and "W" Groups, Detachment 101 had to get organized, evaluate the lessons learned, and train for future missions. Detachment 101 focused on the "A" Group operation. One key lesson was to insert a small "pathfinder" team into the area of operations to do a ground reconnaissance before the main body. This lesson was not recognized until "B" Group disappeared. Scarcity of air support, the schedule of the drop plane, and allowing the mission commander to make the execution decision doomed that effort. "W" Group, similar to "B" Group, was shackled by the regulations and operating restrictions of the Royal Indian Navy. There was no pathfinder team, no prior reconnaissance, nor boat training. The post-mission note on "B" Group that called for air reconnaissance of the area of operations beforehand was ignored by "W" Group.⁴¹ These lessons later became standing operating procedure, however, they were too late to help the remaining long-range penetration operations in 1943, the BALLS and REX missions, as well as BALLS #1, a follow-on mission in February 1944 to establish contact with the BALLS group. All ended in failure.

Detachment 101 also learned by default the very difficult lesson of overextending its capabilities and the necessity for current intelligence. Detachment 101 had successfully conducted shallow penetrations in 1943. FORWARD and KNOTHEAD had established themselves by walking into northern Burma. These missions provided intelligence for bombing targets, built enemy order of battle, and kept the Detachment abreast of the general situation in Burma. These northern Burma operations benefited from the help of the indigenous Kachin tribes. Contrary to other ethnic groups in Burma, the Kachins were pro-Allied and willing to help Detachment 101 in its operations. Of the long-range penetration missions in

OSS Personalities and Detachment 101

THE three most important OSS personalities affecting Detachment 101 operations in Burma were Major General William J. Donovan, Colonel Carl F. Eifler, and Colonel (later Lieutenant General) William Ray Peers. Donovan was the original Coordinator of Information creator and headed the OSS. He had considerable military experience. In World War I, Donovan was dubbed “Wild Bill” and was awarded the Medal of Honor for his valor and leadership of the 169th Infantry Regiment of the “Fighting 69th” Division. In the book, *Wild Bill Donovan: The Last Hero*, author Anthony Cave Brown described Donovan as the most decorated American officer of the war because he also received the Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Cross, French Croix de Guerre, and numerous other decorations.¹ Following WWI, Donovan went into law and dabbled in politics. After WWII, he served as Ambassador to Thailand before his death in 1959. Although Donovan never served as a Director of Central Intelligence for the CIA, he is nonetheless considered the founding father of that organization.²

Those having the most operational impact on Detachment 101 were Eifler and Peers. Both served as commanders as the unit evolved and each had different command styles. Eifler was “a bear of a man; he was tall, muscular and strong, a hard drinker, and very smart. He was a brash, no-nonsense type who overcame all obstacles to form Detachment 101 by sheer will and determination. He did not care how the mission was done—or who got the credit—as long as it was successfully accomplished.”³ Eifler had been an Army Reservist while in the U.S. Treasury Customs Service, where he worked against smuggling rings. This schooled him in the unorthodox methods of criminals and smugglers—which he used in the OSS. It was also through the Army Reserve that he met General Stilwell.⁴ After his removal from command of Detachment 101, Eifler spent the remainder of the war on missions in Europe and in preparations to lead a penetration mission in Korea.⁵ After the war, Eifler struggled to recover from the head inju-

ries received in Burma, yet he managed to finish a career in the Customs Service, co-author *The Deadliest Colonel*, an account of his OSS experiences, and earn a Doctorate of Divinity. He died in 2002 at the age of ninety-five.

Colonel John Coughlin succeeded Eifler at Detachment 101 for a brief period before reassignment to the OSS in China. Lieutenant Colonel Ray Peers then assumed command. Like Eifler, he was an original member of Detachment 101. As the commanding officer for the rest of the war, Peers was responsible for turning the detachment into a joint unconventional warfare unit that conducted operations throughout Burma. Eifler was the initial driving force behind Detachment 101, but it was Peers, the professional soldier, who pulled everything together successfully. As a career Army officer, Peers stayed in the military after the war. He served with the CIA during the war in Korea, and had several tours in Vietnam. He retired as a Lieutenant General after thirty-six years of service. One of his final acts in the military was to direct the My Lai massacre investigation. He published the results as *The My Lai Inquiry*. Earlier, he co-authored an account of his Detachment 101 experiences called *Behind the Burma Road*.⁶ One of the most influential SOF pioneers, Peers died in 1984.⁷

1 Anthony Cave Brown, *Wild Bill Donovan: The Last Hero* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 69.

2 Several other biographies exist on Donovan. Among them are: Richard Dunlop, *Donovan: America's Master Spy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1982) and Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency* (Washington DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1981).

3 Major Carl F. Eifler, “Report of Action to Date and Request for Instructions,” to Colonel William J. Donovan, 24 November 1942, Folder 49, Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226, 21.

4 Heidi Vion, *Booms from Behind the Lines: Covert Experiences of OSS Detachment 101 in World War II* CBI Theater (MA thesis, California State University: Fullerton, 2004), 284–85, 304–305.

5 Thomas N. Moon and Carl F. Eifler, *The Deadliest Colonel* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975), 216–32.

6 William R. Peers, *The My Lai Inquiry* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979); William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road: The True Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Force* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963).

7 Special Edition: The 101 Association Mourns a Leader, Detachment 101 Association Incorporated Newsletter, April, 1984, copy in author's possession.

1943, only one, “A” Group, was in a Kachin area. While they succeeded in dropping only one bridge instead of the original three, the “A” Group was quite successful. The debriefs from “A” Group provided extensive intelligence on the attitudes of the local population, economic hardships, locations and patrolling schedules of Japanese troops, and familiarity with jungle conditions.⁴² Detachment 101 was able to use this knowledge in its subsequent missions into the Kachin-dominated area prior to the Marauder's advance in mid-1944.

The third and biggest lesson learned had a major impact on future operations and helped Detachment 101 grow into one of the largest OSS overseas commands. Eifler realized how critical it was for the Detachment to have its own organic transportation to control the insertion, extraction, and support of teams behind enemy lines. Eifler reported his problems dealing with the Army Air Forces on 6 April 1943. Every Army Air Forces unit—bombers, fighters, and transport—had to have local approvals before General Stilwell gave his final approval.⁴³ Even with permission granted to use Air Forces assets, Detachment 101 operations were still bound by their regulations and restrictions. This is what Eifler told OSS headquarters in Washington:

From the beginning, when I was originally called into this organization, I have stated that successful operations should utilize the methods of the smuggler; that military methods would not be effective. We are forced at the present time, however, to use military methods that are all wrong for this kind of work. ... The planes we use are military planes manned by military personnel, operated in a military manner, first thought

and consideration being given to equipment . . . for an organization like ours, our first thought should be given our main equipment and that equipment is a trained agent. He is a tool, a very expensive tool, and his life should be guarded jealously as long as it is in our hands. If he is to be flown into enemy territory, he should be given every chance of a successful landing instead of which, flying under military regulations, he is taken over enemy territory in broad daylight, dropped in daylight along with his equipment. . . . Military planes cannot fly at night. Why, I don't know.⁴⁴

It likewise applied to amphibious insertions. The other element was operational security. Agents and operations were exposed to unnecessary risks because non-cleared or "vetted" personnel were involved in operational insertions, resupply, and extractions.

Eifler had a solution. He asked for permission to purchase a small fleet of aircraft that could take off and land on short landing fields and be fitted with pontoons if necessary. As for delivery boats, Eifler, the former Customs Service officer, proposed a fast speedboat like those used by liquor smugglers during Prohibition in the United States.⁴⁵ Fortunately, Donovan and the OSS staff agreed. By the end of the war, 101 had its own small air force—dubbed the "Red Ass Squadron"—of light L-1 and L-5 liaison and artillery spotter aircraft. These planes proved ideal for insertion and extraction of personnel, able bodied or wounded. Detachment 101 also had a small fleet of dedicated U.S. Army Air Force C-47 cargo aircraft to drop supplies. In November 1943, a small PT-like boat was acquired. By 1945, Detachment 101 had a small fleet of high-powered boats, as well as a section of OSS Maritime Unit swimmers. However, all this was post-Eifler.

Yet, in March 1943, Detachment 101's future was still very much in doubt because the results of its three long-range penetration operations were unknown. Both sections of "A" Group were following the same general trail, but made their way independently to Fort Hertz. They knew that the first outposts of Kachin Levies, a British-led frontier force, were located on the approaches to Fort Hertz. Maddox's group arrived on 16 May 1943. Barnard's group, in the lead and in contrast to Maddox's group, had radio contact with Detachment 101 and received some supply drops. On 7 March, a note was dropped ordering them to stay in the area and provide intelligence based on an urgent and critical need.⁴⁶ The Japanese had reinforced the area around Myitkyina in response to the Chindit expedition, and it was feared that they would make a push north to take Sumprabum. Barnard's group lingered in the area and collected intelligence on targets, roads, and the Japanese military, as well as determined the friendly villages and assessed the general situation in Burma. They returned to Fort Hertz on 11 June after eighteen weeks in the field behind enemy lines. Afterward, Barnard and Beamish elected to return to SOE.⁴⁷ Maddox later parachuted in to take charge of the RED group and Quinn did the same with PAT in November 1943. Milton chose to lead the OSCAR group that rescued downed

pilots.

Inserting the teams blind meant that Eifler and the Detachment 101 staff had no idea as to why the mission failed or what happened to "B" or "W" Groups at the time. It was not until June 1945 that Detachment 101 learned the fate of their 1943 long-range teams. After Rangoon was captured by the British in May 1945, Colonel Ray Peers, the last commander of Detachment 101, sent Lieutenant Danny Mudrinich, a former FORWARD operative from northern Burma, to Rangoon to investigate the fate of their lost agents. Mudrinich had to rely heavily on X-2 (OSS counter-intelligence branch) interrogations of Japanese collaborators and friendly natives. Despite being shot at by Japanese holdouts, the OSS lieutenant interviewed villagers who had last seen the missing agents. At the end of June 1945 the investigations were concluded and the Detachment's financial officer George Gorin and lawyer Charles Henderson then settled the pay and provided restitution to the families of the lost agents.

The drop on 24 February 1943 was the last contact Detachment 101 ever had with "B" Group. Radioman Allan Richter remembered monitoring the radios for a week hoping for the call that never came.⁴⁸ On the premise that "B" Group radios had been damaged in the jump, a B-25 escorted by two P-40s flew up and down the valley on 6 March searching for recognition panels.⁴⁹ They were too late. Two days before, the detachment radio operators had heard the following Japanese broadcast:

Rangoon: *Unable to take any positive steps in the retaking of Burmese territory, the desperate British Army in India is now resorting to external activities, some of which were frustrated at the very start by the vigilant Japanese authorities in Burma and the loyal attitude of the Burmese towards their reborn country. A recent report revealed that a group of six British spies on 23 February landed by parachute at a certain point in north-western Burma. Entertaining the idea that any place was safe where there were no Japanese troops, they were greatly shocked when a group of alert Burmese villagers immediately rushed at them. In the struggle that followed, the brave villagers killed three of the spies and captured the rest and subsequently delivered them to the Japanese troops stationed nearby. This recent incident shows that any and all attempts by Britain to win and cajole the Burmese will end in failure and disaster. All the Burmese*



Personnel assigned to the China-Burma-India theater wore this shoulder patch. The blue field and stripes represent the United States, the Star represents India, and the Sun represents Nationalist China.



Parachute insertions into Japanese-occupied Burma were often conducted under less-than-ideal conditions. This undated photograph shows a daylight insertion. Note the rough terrain, vegetation, and low altitude of the C-47 drop aircraft.

people, from the humble villager to the patriotic leader, realize the danger of John Bull.⁵⁰

According to Lieutenant Mudrinich's 1945 investigation, the villagers led the captured survivors of "B" Group to Lawksawk. On 27 February they were turned over to the Japanese who imprisoned them in Taunggyi. They provided no information despite being severely tortured for two to three days. In an attempt to convince the rest to talk, the Japanese executed three men—likely Ballard, Goodwin, and Hood. On 15 March 1943, the last three prisoners, all in very poor health, were taken under heavy guard to Rangoon. They never arrived.⁵¹

Eifler's handshakes on the beach were the last contact with "W" Group. Once ashore, the agents hid themselves. The following day, they paid a fisherman to take them to the nearby village of Kyaukpyu. "W" Group then managed to get to Dawmya. Here the agents' luck ran out. The group was probably betrayed to the Japanese by local villagers. On 19 March 1943, on a trail near Dawmya, Japanese troops surrounded the agents of "W" Group. Trapped, they followed Eifler's advice and tried to shoot their way out. One Japanese soldier was killed and another wounded. However Charles Morrell and John Sheridan lost their lives in the breakout. The remaining four sought cover on a wooded hill nearby. The Japanese forces mortared the hill, killing Vincent Snadden. The last three agents escaped by moving into heavier vegetation. On the run, John Aikman was chased from Natmaw village, caught by the villagers and shot by the headman on 24 March 1943. Three weeks later, the Japanese captured D'Attaiades and Willson. They were taken to the prison at Taungup, tortured, and beheaded sometime around 25 April 1943.⁵²

However, despite having lost contact with "B" and "W" Groups and not knowing why they failed, Detachment 101 continued throughout 1943 and early 1944 to launch more ambitious long-range penetration operations further and

further south. In south Burma, the populations were not willing to help the Allies. Thus, the BALLS, BALLS #1, and REX missions were complete failures. REX, the most ambitious of all of them, was a two-man team that parachuted in the pre-dawn hours of 13 November 1943 into the outskirts of Rangoon to report harbor traffic. It was never heard from again.

Although these operational failures in 1943 and early 1944 were serious, the detachment commanders and staff learned from their mistakes, changed concepts of operations, developed standing operating procedures, instituted necessary training, and incorporated the Kachins. Detachment 101 learned the necessity for having current area intelligence and organic transportation assets, as well as the value of working with trusted and capable native populations. Unbridled enthusiasm gave way to more realistic operational plans that yielded results. While these elements were not successfully applied to the long-range penetrations of 1943 and early 1944, they were afterward. They built on the more successful shallow penetrations in northern Burma to expand their capabilities and justify organic transportation. The probability of success was increased tremendously. By learning these lessons and focusing their efforts in the north where the Kachins could help, Detachment 101 would, by May 1944, prove to be an effective intelligence collection unit that could field a strong guerrilla fighting force and become a thorn in the side of the Japanese in northern Burma. Detachment 101 became such an indispensable asset in the Burma Campaign that it was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation in January 1946. It was the only OSS unit in the Far East to be so recognized. Only the OSS Operational Groups in Europe received the same honor.

These same operating principles apply to Army Special Operations today. Enthusiasm cannot be confused with capability and readiness for combat. Detachment 101 learned this lesson the hard way in 1943 and early 1944. However, the constant drive to improve enabled it to succeed and become a model organization in the OSS. ♠

This article is dedicated to the veterans of Detachment 101. Special thanks go to Mrs. Marje Luce, longtime editor of the Detachment 101 Association newsletter and widow of 101er Navy Captain James Luce. Without her help this article would not have been possible. Thanks Marje.

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Endnotes

- 1 Kermit Roosevelt, *The Overseas Targets: The War Report of the OSS Vol. II*, (Washington DC: Carrollton Press, 1976), 361.
- 2 Roosevelt, *The Overseas Targets*, 11–26. For an account of the OSS operations in North Africa, see Carlton S. Coon, *A North African Story: The Long-Mislaidd Diary-Like Account of a Harvard Professor of Anthropology Turned Cloak-and-Dagger Operative for General Donovan and his OSS; 1942–1943*, (Ipswich, Mass: Gambit, 1980).
- 3 Frank Dorn, *Walkout: With Stilwell in Burma*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1971), 243.
- 4 Major Carl F. Eifler, “Report of Action to Date and Request for Instructions,” to Colonel William J. Donovan, 24 November 1942, Folder 49, Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226, National Archives II, College Park, MD, 7. This often told story is also repeated in Thomas N. Moon and Carl F. Eifler’s *The Deadliest Colonel*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1975), 61, and Richard Dunlop’s *Behind Japanese Lines: With the OSS in Burma*, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1979), 109. The initial guidance given was verbal. Confirmation of this can be found in a letter to Eifler that is in the author’s possession: Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell to Major Carl F. Eifler, “Letter of Instruction,” 15 September 1942.
- 5 Moon and Eifler, *The Deadliest Colonel*, 61. The official record, while not giving an exact figure of ninety days, does imply that Eifler was under extreme pressure to prove himself and the new organization to a skeptical General Stilwell.
- 6 Lieutenant Colonel Carl F. Eifler to Colonel William J. Donovan, “Status of O.S.S. Detachment 101,” 16 February 1943, Folder 49, Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226.
- 7 For a discussion of the activities of SOE in the Far East, see Charles Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
- 8 Eifler, “Report of Actions to Date and Request for Instructions,” 12.
- 9 Both Richmond, and a later SOE officer, Colonel Ottaway, had known each other from working in Burma before the war. Richmond was involved in the timber extraction industry around Myitkyina while Ottaway did mining near Tavoy. However, both liaison officers would be quietly dismissed from the Detachment in late 1944 for graft based on Army contracts made by Ottaway’s company, Leslie and Company.
- 10 Eifler, “Report of Actions to Date and Request for Instructions,” 14 (see “Major Eifler’s Mission in Relation to S.O.E. India”).
- 11 “A” Group is among the Detachment 101 operations most documented in the literature with no fewer than three accounts and one full-length memoir: William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America’s Most Successful Guerrilla Force*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), 68–98; Moon and Eifler, *The Deadliest Colonel*, 98–99; Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 147–99, John Beamish, *Burma Drop*, (London: Elek Books, 1958). Oscar Milton has also written an unpublished memoir. Also see Jack Barnard, “Report of Secret Operations in Burma,” Folder 448, Box 30, Entry 154, Record Group 226. Barnard was supposed to have authored a post-war account of the “A” Group operation as well. In the author’s possession is a copy of the April 1979 Detachment 101 Association newsletter. In an article by Dennis V. Cavanaugh, “How You Can Write Our History,” he mentions that Barnard was writing an account called “Attack on the Railroad Bridges.” Numerous inquiries to Detachment 101 veterans have not uncovered a copy, nor even a recall that such an account was published by the 101 Association.
- 12 Eifler, “Report of Action to Date and Request for Instructions,” 7–8, the exact wording of this mission guidance can be found in a letter to Eifler that is in the author’s possession: Stilwell to Eifler, “Letter of Instruction,” 15 September 1942.
- 13 Lieutenant Colonel Carl F. Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities Covering the Period December 26, 1942 to date,” to Colonel William J. Donovan, 6 April 1943, Folder 49 “319.1 Report to Washington,” Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226, 99–101.
- 14 “Report on Secret Operations in Burma,” post-June 1943, Folder 448, Box 30, Entry 154, Record Group 226.
- 15 Eifler, “Report of Action to Date and Request for Instructions,” 18–20.
- 16 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 5–9.
- 17 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 17.
- 18 Beamish, *Burma Drop*, 59–60.
- 19 Lieutenant Colonel Carl F. Eifler, cable to “RED,” date unknown, when A Group was in the field, but after the bridges were blown and the group had split, Folder 447, Box 30, Entry 154, Record Group 226.
- 20 Casualty Report, 13 October, 1944, Folder 372, Box 58, Entry 190, Record Group 226. Note this file has a mistake, and lists John Beamish of “A” Group as among the missing of “B” Group. In fact, it is John Clark (listed later in the report with the “W” Group personnel) who should be listed in Beamish’s place. For further information on Clark, see the file F. Clark, John C (John), Box 54, Entry 199, Record Group 226.
- 21 Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 101–102.
- 22 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 51–52; Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 102.
- 23 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 43–45.
- 24 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 43–44.
- 25 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 44.
- 26 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 45.
- 27 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 45.
- 28 Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 102.
- 29 Lieutenant Colonel Carl F. Eifler, “Report covering the period April 6 to April 30 1943,” to General William J. Donovan, 30 April 1943, Folder 49 “319.1 Report to Washington,” Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226, 68–69; Field Marshal Viscount Slim, *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942–1945*, (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 154.
- 30 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 72–80.
- 31 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 72–80.
- 32 “Operation Maurice,” 2 March 1943, Folder 49, Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226.
- 33 Eifler, “Report covering the period April 6 to April 30, 1943,” 72–73.
- 34 Lieutenant Colonel John G. Coughlin, “Situation as of this date,” to Colonel William J. Donovan, 10 March 1943, Folder 49 “Report to Washington,” Box 39, Entry 190, Record Group 226, 8.
- 35 Lieutenant Daniel Mudrinich, “Report of Investigation: Charles Morrell,” 29 June 1945, Folder Morell, Charles (Charlie), Box 54, Entry 199, Record Group 226; John Aikman, “Student Questionnaire” for John Aikman, 30 October 1942, Folder Aikman, John (Jinx), Box 52, Entry 199, Record Group 226; a misfiled operational plan for the group can be located in Folder “Balls” 009505, Box 214, E210, Record Group 226; Operation plan and summary of mission personnel, undated, Folder 009505, Box 214, Entry 210, Record Group 226.
- 36 Moon and Eifler, *The Deadliest Colonel*, 117; Eifler, “Report covering the period April 6 to April 30 1943,” 75, indicates there were 1000 pounds of supplies.
- 37 Roosevelt, *The Overseas Targets*, 378.
- 38 Moon and Eifler, *The Deadliest Colonel*, 118–19.
- 39 Allan Richter, Detachment 101, telephone interview by Troy J. Sacquety, 25 September 2005, notes, author’s personal possession. Allan Richter also designed and built the long-range radios used by the long-range penetration groups.
- 40 Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 132.
- 41 Eifler, “Detailed Report of My Activities,” 51.
- 42 Lieutenant Colonel Carl F. Eifler, “Report Covering Period July 1 to July 31, Inclusive,” to General William J. Donovan, 1 August 1943, Folder 1, Box 65, Entry 99, Record Group 226, 8–40.
- 43 Eifler, “Report Covering Period July 1 to July 31, Inclusive,” 77–78.
- 44 Eifler, “Report Covering Period July 1 to July 31, Inclusive,” 78.
- 45 Eifler, “Report Covering Period July 1 to July 31, Inclusive,” 79–80.
- 46 Ray (Peers), letter to “JACK,” 7 March 1943, Folder 447, Box 30, Entry 154, Record Group 226, 17. This is a copy of a letter that was presumably dropped to the Barnard-led section of “A” Group in a resupply bundle.
- 47 Captain William Wilkinson, Detachment 101 officer in charge of the FORWARD group, “Message from Wilkinson,” 2 June 1943, Folder 447, Box 30, Entry 154, Record Group 226.
- 48 Richter interview, 25 September 2005.
- 49 Eifler, “Report Covering the Period April 6 to April 30, 1943,” 50.
- 50 Eifler, “Report Covering the Period April 6 to April 30, 1943,” 52–53.
- 51 “Report of Investigation: Harry W. Ballard,” 29 June 1945, Folder Ballard, Harry W. (Harry), Box 52, Entry 199, Record Group 226.
- 52 Lieutenant Daniel Mudrinich, “Report of Investigation: John Aikman,” 29 June 1945, Folder Aikman, John (Jinx), Box 52, Entry 199, Record Group 226.

NOTE: All photos and patches are part of the author’s collection.

Everyone Can Take Pride in This Fight:

ODA 163 in Afghanistan



by Charles H. Briscoe

USSOCOM PAO guidance on current operations dictates the use of pseudonyms for SOF majors and below. Those individuals identified by true name in previously published news articles are the exception.

IN the morning of 11 April 2005, al-Qaeda-associated militia ambushed an Afghan military convoy escorting General Khil Baz, former 25th Infantry Division commander, to Gardez. The ambush occurred northwest of the village of Barak Kalay on the Khowst-Gardez road, near the pass. Rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) and small-arms fire stopped the Afghan Security Force (ASF), inflicting minor damage on the vehicles. The 45-man ASF dismounted and returned fire, but were unable to maneuver against the well-positioned attackers. The steep, rugged terrain found in this area adjacent to the Pakistan border was popular for “hit and run raids and ambushes.”¹ General Baz quickly called for assistance using his satellite telephone.

U.S. Army Special Forces ODA 163 and a Khowst Provincial Force (KPF) platoon located at Chapman Airfield were the chosen Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-Afghanistan) QRF (Quick Reaction Force). The two forces were ready and closest to the ambush site. Nearby at Fire Base Salerno UH-60 Black Hawk and AH-64 Apache helicopters from Task Force (TF) Sabre were on alert.² A rapid response enabled the QRF to find, fix, and engage the ambush perpetrators several kilometers from the ambush site. The enemy was caught by the lead element of the reaction force before it could escape and a fierce firefight erupted. Air Force Close Air Support proved ineffec-

tive against enemy positions hidden in the scrub vegetation on the reverse slopes of steep, narrow fingers that dropped down into deep ravines. Fighting in the rocky, mountainous terrain at 8,200 feet was tough. After three hours of heavy fighting, thirteen al-Qaeda-associated militia fighters were dead; three Americans and one KPF Afghan were wounded.³ This joint Coalition QRF mission was well directed by the SF ODA detachment commander using appropriate coordination, control, and support provided by all levels of command.

The 30 May 2006 *Army Times* article, “There Was a Lot of Shooting: Soldiers Honored for Heroic Assault During Clash in Afghan” by Michelle Tan, briefly synopsised the three-hour action. It focused on two ODA 163 soldiers and a 23rd Special Tactics Squadron (STS) airman who were awarded Silver Stars and a Bronze Star for Valor.⁴ That synopsis did not do justice to this multi-faceted, complex action. The purpose of this article is two-fold: to provide “the rest of the story” on an action effected by an experienced, well-trained SF team (supported by a courageous Black Hawk aircrew), and to highlight a



1st Special Forces Group beret flash.



General Khil Baz.



Khowst Provincial Force (KPF) shoulder patch.

UH-60 Black Hawks of TF Saber were used to transport the ODA 163 QRF.



well-executed mission by the 1st Special Forces Group (SFG) during its first Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) rotation in Afghanistan.⁵

Appreciating and understanding the harshness of the steep terrain, factoring how close the fighting was, the limited visibility between combatants on the ground—the enemy, SF team, KPF, and Navy SEAL platoon—corresponding actions, and the experience of the ODA are critical to understanding what happened when, and why. Thus, a sequential presentation of the events that lays out the actions by the various higher headquarters will be used to reconstruct a very complicated fight and the appropriate responses. This narrative focuses on ODA 163.

Team members, as well as higher commanders and staff, explained their Afghanistan missions and their specific roles during the QRF fight on 11 April 2005. In this combined action, SF and joint commanders at all levels coordinated staff actions appropriately to support the action without imposing on the ground commander directly involved commanding the fight.⁶ The smooth support rendered by all levels illustrates why this particular Coalition joint action is important to the Force. Prior to discussing the details of the 11 April 2005 action, it is important for context to know the background of the 1st SFG's involvement in OEF-Afghanistan, its mission, and its pre-deployment preparations and training.

The decision by U.S. Army Special Forces Command that 1st SFG would provide its 2nd Battalion to support the CJSOTF in Afghanistan was made on 7 June 2004. When Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Kirk H. Nilsson, a twelve-year 1st SFG veteran, assumed command of the 2nd Battalion two weeks later, he knew they were going to Afghanistan in December to support the 7th SFG. Colonel Jeffrey D. Waddell, the 7th SFG commander, assigned his 1st Battalion the OEF mission in Regional Command (RC) South and West. While the staff prepared the campaign plan, the 2/1 SFG ODAs focused on critical skills needed to survive on the battlefield—ground mobility

Afghanistan map depicting Khowst, Gardez, and Ghazni in relation to Kabul, the capital, and Kandahar to the south-west.



Topographical map showing Khowst–Gardez road, ambush site, and approximate direction and mileage to Chapman Airfield.

vehicle crew-served weapons fire and maneuver, 81mm mortar refresher, communications, and tactical medical training. The high-desert, mountainous area of Yakima, Washington, proved ideal.⁷

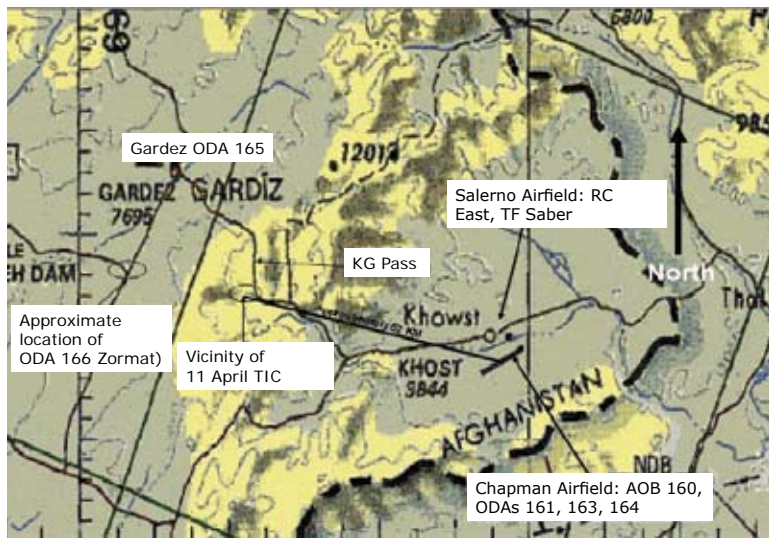
After the August 2004 site survey, the 2/1 ODBs focused on their specific areas of operations. ODB 160 had the Khowst–Gardez bowl (the center sector) while ODB 140 concentrated on the northern sector of RC East. “The battalion training scenarios were built to concentrate on a lot of collective tasks simultaneously,” stated LTC Nilsson. “As it happened, the requirement to field an ODB for a late-September Combined Training Center rotation meant that A Company (ODB 140) was the last 2/1 element deployed to Afghanistan.”⁸

To cover the area of operations of RC East properly in accordance with Joint Task Force 76 (JTF-76) guidance “to get SOF [special operations forces] on the border areas,” Colonel Waddell realigned CJSOTF forces. 2nd Battalion, 1st SFG [Forward Operating Base (FOB) 12] would command three AOBs (advanced operating bases): two organic and Company C (AOB 730) from the 7th SFG. In this way, a single commander could focus on RC East and the Pakistan border areas. Based on the number of ODAs, team strengths, and special skill levels, Nilsson assigned the center sector—the Khowst–Gardez area—to Company C, 2/1 SFG (AOB 160).

The 25th Infantry Division Artillery, or TF Thunder, the conventional force in RC East, had positioned 105mm artillery in two-gun sections on/near the SF bases and a battery of 155mm artillery to support the Afghan border control posts (BCPs). The regional commanders supported provincial reconstruction teams with missions to promote local governance and stimulate infrastructure rebuilding.⁹ When the ODAs were operating in areas or BCPs beyond the fire base artillery fans, 155mm two-gun sections were often “jumped” by helicopter to cover the gaps in coverage.¹⁰

For the CJSOTF, this was an economy-of-force decision. Since infiltrations could not be prevented, they could at least deny sanctuary. The BCPs reduced freedom-of-maneuver to larger enemy forces intent on massing to attack. Instead of a 360-degree fight, the engagements

**Pseudonyms have been used for all military personnel with a rank lower than lieutenant colonel.*

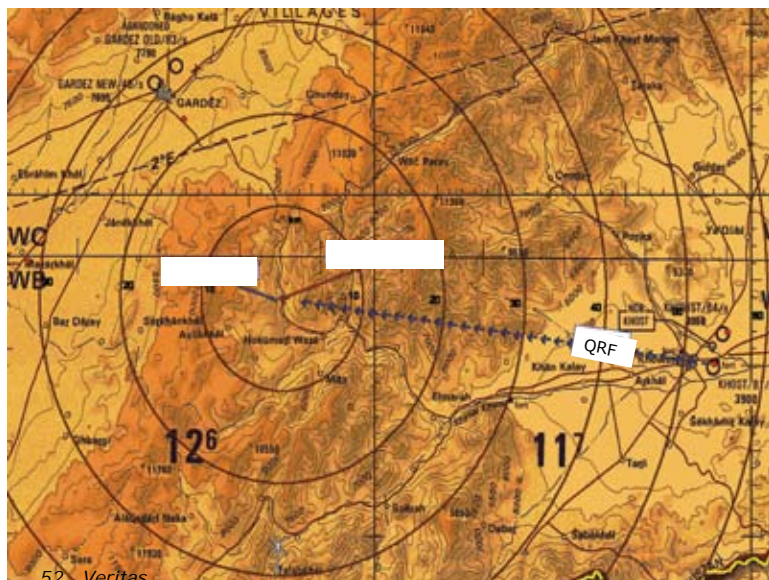


Topographical flight map revealing high mountain range between Khowst and Gardez, ODA 165, ODA 166, Troops in Contact (TIC) site, Salerno Airfield, and Chapman Airfield.

would be more like 180-degree fights on the Afghan border. This meant very active vehicular patrolling by the ODAs during the winter months.¹¹ Operating in the harsh winter weather common in the mountainous border region became routine for the ODAs based around Fire Base Chapman.

ODB 160 had the largest sector, containing the Afghan border control posts that had received attacks the most often. Major Jack Spartan* had hoped to use General Khil Baz to help stand up an effective paramilitary force to secure the border areas.¹² Since ODA 163 responded to attacks on BCP 6, the model for future Afghan posts, it initially assumed the FOB QRF for the border and then the entire Khowst-Gardez area. Despite the fact that ODA 163 had been in-country for four months, it rehearsed QRF actions weekly, and was “spun up” fifteen times for missions not executed. Due to those factors, Master Sergeant (MSG) Paul Cooper, team sergeant, constantly stressed immediate action drills, scheduled

Aviator flight map showing Chapman Airfield in relation to ambush site on Khowst-Gardez road and the infiltration site of the QRF (ODA 163+).



firing to maintain weapons battle sights, practiced artillery and close air support direction, and inspected individual equipment for readiness. Having worked in the Khowst-Gardez area on a previous deployment, Cooper and his ODA commander, Captain (CPT) Brett Dandridge*, worked out a solid “game plan.”¹³

Every BCP, village, and city in their assigned sector had been visited multiple times, each time accompanied by the local commander of the Afghan Security Forces (ASF). “We put a ‘host nation face’ on everything that we did,” said MSG Cooper. “We got our Civil Affairs teams to fund wells and schools and arranged Medical Readiness and Training Exercises. In conjunction with these, we became familiar with the terrain and improved our situational awareness. By riding armed aerial reconnaissance flights, we were able to select multiple routes to and from BCPs. As a result, we located the Taliban and al-Qaeda LOCs [lines of communication] in our zone.”¹⁴ Perimeter security for the fire bases and the QRF mission entailed training up ASFs for their defensive and offensive roles.

Recruiting, training, and organizing local ASFs and training KPFs to support a QRF were implied ODA 163 missions. A day-long mini-selection course reduced the mostly illiterate fifty candidates down to the best thirty. Then, a mile run, followed by an obstacle course, identified those recruits who had the most heart and intestinal fortitude to finish training. Some cursory background checks determined honesty and integrity. During “basic training,” personnel were regularly rotated through leadership positions to identify the platoon and the squad leaders. The leaders received more pay than the privates. The smartest recruits received medical and demolitions training and were awarded “proficiency” pay and “bonuses” for outstanding jobs. These incentives leveled the economic playing field between ASF and KPF soldiers.¹⁵ The ODA 163 “game plan” was to have the ASF and KPF well trained before the spring thaws came in March, when stay-behind al-Qaeda and Taliban militia fighters were normally resupplied to conduct guerrilla operations in the warmer months.

Having been “spun up” fifteen times before, individual QRF equipment was pre-positioned and ready when CPT Dandridge was summoned to the ODB operations center by MAJ Spartan. Every man carried two basic loads of ammunition for the QRF mission. They also wore Level 4 body armor. With “Go” bags carried onboard the helicopters, the ODA could operate independently for twenty-four to thirty-six hours.¹⁶

“Mobility and maneuver were part of every fight,” said MSG Cooper. “The team was quickly assembled and alerted. While they ‘kitted up’ and checked weapons, CPT Dandridge and I waited for the execute order in the Ops Cen [operations center].”¹⁷ KPF with advisors and interpreters “rounded out” the QRF. UH-60 Black Hawk and AH-64 Apache aircrews at nearby Fire Base Salerno had begun pre-flight checks of their aircraft.

The ODB 160 commander, MAJ Spartan, knew that

General Khil Baz was a friend of Coalition forces and that when working with Afghan forces, rapid responses to calls for assistance were important to garner loyalty and build confidence. After discovering that the conventional TF Thunder QRF at Fire Base Salerno was not readily available, and knowing that response time was critical, Spartan queried ODA 165 as to its ability to do the mission. It was only thirty miles away from the ambush site. Captain Jerry Harkins*, the ODA commander, responded that based on road conditions and steep terrain, it would take his element two hours to drive through the mountains to the ambush site.¹⁸

MAJ Spartan then called FOB 12 because the ambush was outside ODB 160's battle space. As the request sped up the chain of command (from FOB 12 to the CJSOTF-Afghanistan to JTF-76), it was fortunate that JTF commander, Major General Jason Kamiya, happened to be visiting Fire Base Salerno. Though the ambush site was in the battle space of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment (3/3 Marines), Kamiya assigned the mission to the SOF QRF. They already had forces postured to execute. TF Thunder and 3/3 Marines would be in support.¹⁹ In the short time it took to gain approval (less than twenty minutes), FOB 12 had alerted the Fire Base Salerno helicopters and close air support "on station" of a potential mission.²⁰

Planeside at Chapman Airfield, Dandridge and Cooper briefed the QRF with the details of the mission. "We were to find, fix, and destroy the enemy ambush force. We got the usual 'pump' that came with 'action outside the wire.' The team always went out prepared . . . expecting a firefight," said Staff Sergeant (SSG) Matthew Marco*, the junior 18C engineer.²¹ As rehearsed, ODA 163 divided into two elements and boarded the Black Hawks; the KPF elements followed.²²

In the first aircraft, CPT Dandridge would stay airborne for command and control while the second helicopter carrying Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CW2) Anthony C. Stencill*, the detachment executive officer, and MSG Cooper landed first to investigate. By the time the UH-60s lifted off from Chapman Airfield, two A-10 Warthogs and the two Apaches were already en route to the ambush site thirty minutes away. When the Black Hawks were fifteen minutes out, the AH-64s provided an exact grid location for General Baz's convoy on the Khowst-Gardez road (easy to spot by the Jinga trucks stacked up on both sides of the ambush site) and reported no sign of attackers in the immediate area.²³

Lacking communications with General Baz, CPT Dandridge directed CW2 Stencill to land near the stalled convoy. He was to confirm that Baz was alive, ascertain whether or not he wanted a ride out of the mountain pass, and collect specifics on enemy exfiltration routes. Dandridge would overwatch the meeting from his aircraft and pass up-to-date information to AOB 160 and FOB 12. All higher commands closely monitored the situation.²⁴

General Baz gave more than a direction where the enemy withdrew—he identified the exact finger that the enemy had used and the amount of time that had

elapsed since the ambush. Baz declined a ride saying that "he had to demonstrate to everyone that he was still 'the man' in the valley." Other than bullet holes in a few trucks, the Baz convoy was relatively unscathed. Based on these specifics, Air Force Technical Sergeant (TSgt) Bradley Reilly [Combat Control Team] called the A-10s (BOAR 01 and 02) and AH-64s (CARDPLAYER) to narrow their search patterns on enemy egress routes heading southwest.²⁵ Considering the steepness and severity of the terrain, and the time elapsed since the enemy's withdrawal, the helicopter-borne QRF had a chance to catch the escaping enemy fighters. The chase was on!

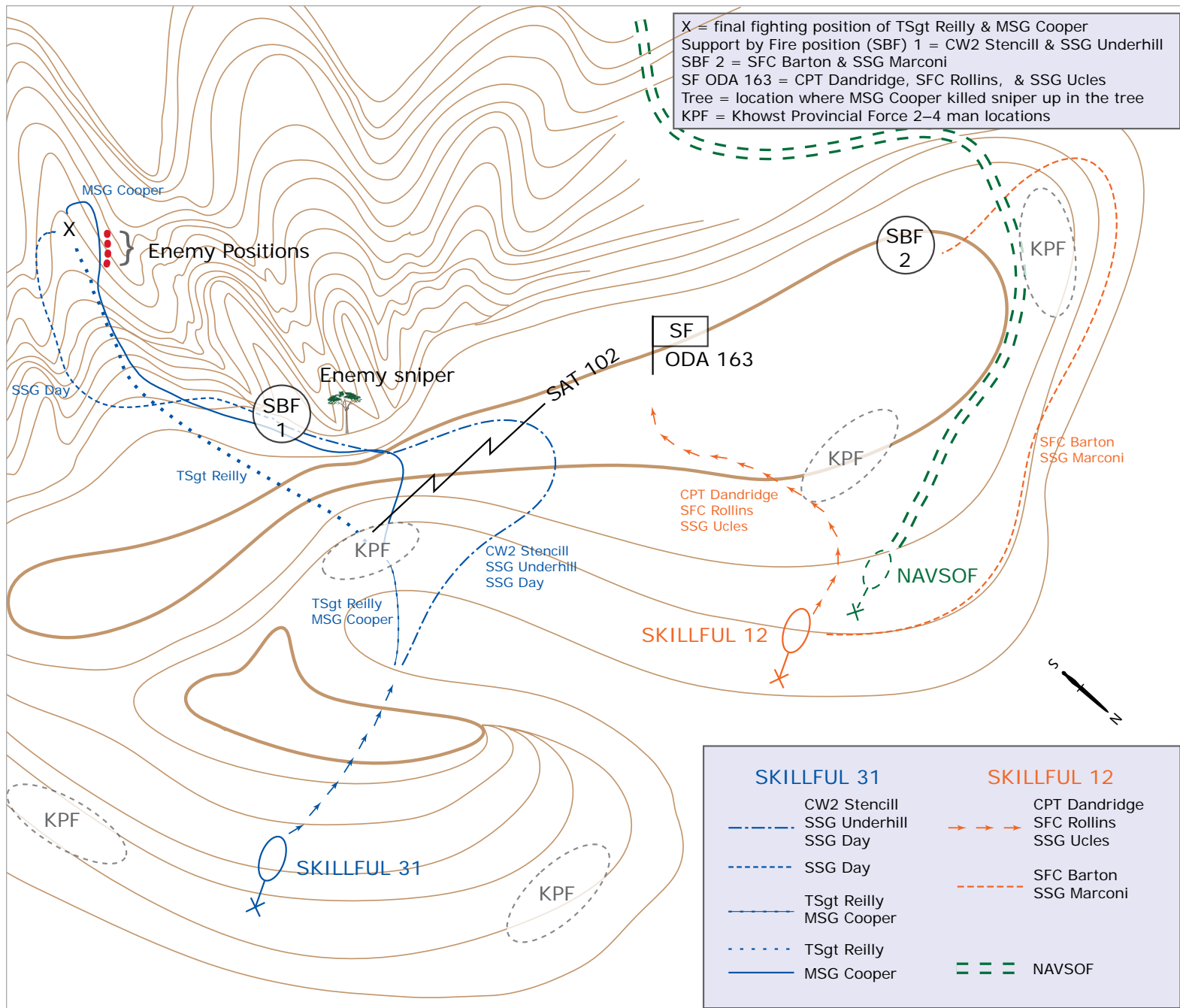
Five minutes after the Black Hawks left the ambush site, one of the AH-64s sweeping the area reported spotting three personnel carrying AK-47s and RPGs. They were walking in a draw using the vegetation to conceal their move. Since this was a very complex fight in very rugged and convoluted mountainous terrain, the following is a visual image of what CPT Dandridge saw as he approached the target area from the north:²⁶

*A large exaggerated "C-shaped" flat butte that was slightly tilted down to the west was the dominant terrain feature. There was a shallow bowl in the "cup" of the "C" between arms. Numerous steep, narrow-ridged fingers with rocky ravines in-between dropped from the south side of the butte. The high-desert, rocky, mountainous terrain (8,200 feet) had scrub evergreen vegetation scattered about and rock outcroppings and abutments along the ridges and crests. The suspected al-Qaeda militia fighters had been spotted near the top arm of the "C."*²⁷

CPT Dandridge had the pilots of his Black Hawk, SKILLFUL 12, cautiously overfly the suspected area to confirm the sighting. Dandridge told CW2 Stencill to prepare to land offset of the suspected enemy. Stencill's pilots, in the Black Hawk SKILLFUL 31, literally blew

A-10 video showing a southwesterly view of the exaggerated "C"-shaped butte with slight depression ("cup" of the "C") between the arms as seen by Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Stencill and Captain Brett Dandridge as they approached in their helicopters. Stencill will be landed offset of the enemy sighted on the reverse slope of the "C's" bottom arm while Dandridge, coming in second, will land on the reverse slope of the "C's" top arm.





Sketch map prepared by ODA 163 and Dr. Charles H. Briscoe—not to scale—depicting approximate positions.

one fighter's blankets off to reveal an AK-47 and several RPG rounds at his side. The door gunners were trained on the suspect.²⁸

Suspicious confirmed, CW2 Stencill had SKILLFUL 31 land on the reverse slope of an adjacent hilltop (north reverse slope of the bottom arm, parallel to the ridge with a single aircraft wheel on the hillside), while requesting that the AH-64s engage the enemy fighter with the RPG rounds.²⁹ SKILLFUL 31 hovered while Stencill, MSG Cooper, TSgt Reilly, Staff Sergeant Jubal Day (team medic), Staff Sergeant Nate Underhill*, and seven personnel from the KPF element jumped down (eight to ten feet) to the ground and established 360-degree perimeter security. As the UH-60 lifted off, one enemy fighter jumped up and sprayed the landing site with automatic AK-47 fire.³⁰ "With rounds coming in, that helo blew out of the LZ [landing zone]," remembered Cooper.³¹ Dandridge,

above, quickly relayed: "Troops in Contact (TIC)."³² The fight was on!

As the detachment commander searched for a place to land his helicopter, Cooper, Reilly, and four Afghans fired and maneuvered south and slightly east as Stencill, Day, Underhill, and the remaining KPF started moving and clearing the western flank of the bottom arm of the "C" using the available scrub brush as cover. Enemy machinegun fire concentrated on the military crest of that arm. As Cooper's force swept through a depression on the reverse slope of the finger (the shallow bowl in "cup" of the "C"), it noted the still-warm remains of several cooking fires. Before sweeping the left of the front ridge (upper arm of the "C"), Reilly requested that AH-64s make several 30mm chain gun runs along the crest. After receiving Stencill's initials (because their attacks would be "Danger Close"), the two Apaches com-



Aerial view of the front crest of butte overlooking the southerly finger where Technical Sergeant Bradley Reilly and Master Sergeant Paul Cooper engaged the enemy moving down to the south. Note the scrub vegetation that afforded the enemy some cover while moving off the butte to the south.

menced to attack with cannon and rockets. The gun runs started small fires along that crest.³³

The smoke provided cover, but the fires started by the Apaches dictated directions of maneuver during the assault to clear the left part of the front ridge (top arm of the “C”). As MSG Cooper crested the hill, a machine-gun opened up on him. Fortunately, the gunner was firing high. As he dropped to the ground, Cooper pulled out a grenade and threw it toward the enemy position. After detonation, Cooper jumped up to assault forward, killing the enemy gunner with his M-4 carbine. As MSG Cooper was relaying a quick report to CW2 Stencill, SKILLFUL 12 was flaring to insert CPT Dandridge and his element to the west of Stencill and Cooper on a small hillock (reverse slope of the upper arm of the “C”). Cooper and two KPF Afghans were securing the eastern half of the front ridge line. They provided overwatch as TSgt Reilly and two KPF Afghans investigated a sighting further down a southerly finger to Cooper’s left front.³⁴

Meanwhile, CW2 Stencill, SSG Day, SSG Underhill, and the remaining KPF had cleared the western portion of the forward ridgeline. As Stencill and Underhill started to shift west to close on MSG Cooper, the two of them began receiving heavy enemy fire from due east, south, and southwest. Since “the heaviest amount of machine gun fire was pouring in from the east,” said Stencill, “we held up behind a small rock outcropping at the crest of the hill. Day and the remaining Afghans were to our rear covering the northeast and north.”³⁵ (See top right photo.)

The very convoluted and twisted, steeply-ridged fingers (almost like a crow’s foot) extending south were further distorted by numerous large rock formations with scrub evergreen vegetation protruding from them (see photo bottom right). This combination made pinpointing enemy firing positions very difficult and virtually impossible targets for the AH-64s. When the Apaches were not making gun runs in front of the QRF positions,



Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Stencill and Staff Sergeant Nate Underhill support-by-fire (SBF) position at the top of the southerly finger looking down on Reilly and Cooper’s location.

the enemy fire would immediately intensify. The heavy bombs carried by the A-10s were rather ineffective in the steep, mountainous terrain. The close proximity of the combatants and natural camouflage negated 30mm gun runs by the jets. They remained in orbit high overhead, providing imagery and communications links to Bagram Airbase and Chapman Airfield.³⁶

MSG Cooper, TSgt Reilly, and their KPF Afghans were searching and clearing the eastern sector while CW2 Stencill and his element were still pinned down by heavy enemy fire. This was the situation to his left front (east) when CPT Dandridge, along with Sergeants First Class (SFCs) Steven Rollins* and Daniel Barton*, SSGs Mark Ucles* and Matthew Marco and seven KPF personnel off-loaded SKILLFUL 12 above a slight knoll to the east. SSG Marco remembered: “As we jumped down from the hovering Black Hawk, it wasn’t the usual drop. We threw up a quick perimeter, kneeling and facing out. I couldn’t see much. CPT Dandridge, SFC Rollins, and

KPF soldier joining a compatriot at the SBF position of Stencill and Underhill looking down the convoluted finger—the site of most fighting on 11 April 2005.





Rocky abutment on the southerly finger. MSG Cooper ran around right side (left) heading for cover while TSgt Reilly, wounded in the foot on top, jumped off and headed straight for the nearest cover below.

Ssg Ucles moved out to clear the left side and top of the knoll [right front crest is the majority of the top arm of the "C"]. SFC Barton, the Afghans, and I proceeded to clear to the rear. Then, we worked around the right side and up along the crest to tie into the detachment commander. In the process one of the KPF was wounded in the leg and lower back. Both were grazing flesh wounds. I bandaged him up and he rejoined his fellows. Our element spread out to cover the right flank of the knoll.³⁷

"I saw tracers below us coming from the enemy positions just before we landed," said Dandridge. Twenty plus minutes after receiving the TIC call the Apache gunships reported their fuel status BINGO, requested back-up, and headed back to Fire Base Salerno, some thirty flight-minutes away.³⁸ The volume of enemy fire always appeared to slacken whenever the AH-64s made gun runs along the reverse slope of the ridge. However, as soon as they pulled off the objective into orbit to await another call, the well-hidden enemy fighters would "pop up" from rock-hardened, camouflaged positions and resume the fight with greater intensity.³⁹

"Shortly after the Apaches departed CW2 Stencill called to report that he had two wounded Americans to his left front (south southwest) who, though just seventy-five to one hundred meters down on a southerly pointing finger, could not be seen by him. All that Stencill could see was a heavy volume of fire being exchanged where they were. He could not get down to their location. He was receiving too much fire."⁴⁰ Soon, the fight became more complicated.

"The probing action got us into a bigger engagement," said MSG Cooper. "As fire erupted on the finger below I spotted a guy up in a small tree shooting in that direction. I engaged him with my M-4 and shot him until he quit moving. Firmly wedged against the branches he didn't fall out like they do in the movies. Then, seeing no further threats to my immediate front, I swung back to Brad (Reilly) who was firing into a clump of brush

lower down on the opposite side of the finger. His two KPF Afghans had pulled behind him and taken cover. Realizing that Reilly was exposed and alone, I called to SSG Underhill, my wingman, to tell him that I planned to move down and back Reilly up. Picking my route I ran down into a shallow bowl just behind Brad and then slipped up alongside him."⁴¹ "Like a dart Paul was gone and out of sight," recalled Underhill. "I didn't hear what he said because my ears were ringing from the heavy gunfire but I swung my attention to that side."⁴²

TSgt Reilly, spotting an enemy fighter about thirty feet away, moved down the finger and shot him. As Reilly and the two KPF pressed forward they engaged two more enemy. A firefight ensued and Reilly's KPF quickly sought cover. When MSG Cooper joined Reilly, the two pinned down the enemy to their front, killing one of them. Then, the proverbial "chit hit the fan" as the volume of fire intensified from several directions. Downhill, forward, and separated from the main element, and under heavy fire, Cooper knew that they had to find cover real quick."⁴³

"The nearest protection was a small clump of scrub evergreen bushes and rocks on the left side of the narrow ridge about fifty feet further down the finger. The enemy was on the reverse slope on the right side of the finger. Withdrawing up the bare finger was not a good option," remembered MSG Cooper. "After telling Brad [Reilly] to lay down some fire, I bolted for the scrub trees and then swung to the right when I spotted a rock cliff-like outcropping that had an eight-foot drop. I wasn't prepared to play 'Superman' wearing body armor."⁴⁴

Cooper said, "I was spotted just as I passed the rock outcropping. I felt a round glance off the front of my chest plate and knew that they had me zeroed. I was running full tilt, and just as I reached the edge of the scrub, a burst of fire caught me in the upper legs. It was my momentum and adrenalin that got me past the front of the scrub bushes before my legs collapsed. Still, somehow in falling I managed to 'button hook' down

The wounded Cooper "button hooks" left around the scrub evergreen and scrambles up behind it, opposite the enemy positions.



and behind the rocks and bushes—out of the line of fire. I knew I was hit bad, but I had to return fire to cover Brad. I needed my tourniquet and had to burrow in close to the rocks and scrub trees to avoid getting hit again.” TSgt Reilly, intent on firing into the enemy position, saw Cooper get hit but lost sight of exactly where he went.⁴⁵

Now, alone and exposed, Reilly bolted for the nearest cover—where Cooper had headed. “Seeing the eight-foot drop-off along the direct approach to the scrub trees and rocks, I dropped down on my back in a slight depression on the top of rock cliff. As I looked around at my ‘cover,’ I saw that my feet were exposed. Then, a round from a short burst of enemy fire hit my right foot. It instinctively jerked away as if touched by a buzz saw. Realizing that they had me pinpointed, I scrambled up and jumped off the rock abutment. Adrenalin pumping, I headed for the scrub trees and rocks [the best available cover and fighting position] less than twenty feet away. I didn’t know where Paul [Cooper] had gone after getting hit. Forgetting my foot, I took off running in a low crouch toward the shelter.”⁴⁶

Reilly came crashing behind the near side of the scrub trees and rocks like a baseball player sliding into third base—slamming into the semi-conscious Cooper. “That snapped me back to consciousness,” said MSG Cooper. “Reilly said that he was hit. I chuckled and said, ‘me too,’ and told him that I needed tourniquets applied. While I fumbled mine out, Brad began returning fire at the enemy just across the narrow ridge—twenty feet away at most.”⁴⁷

Knowing that there were four enemy advancing toward them, Reilly decided that “the first order of business was to get the guy who had shot them. He was very close and a decent shot. I spotted the two KPF Afghans to my right rear and motioned for them to shoot at the enemy. After an initial burst of AK-47 fire by one KPF drew an enemy fusillade, it took a lot more hollering to get them to fire again. Then, one of the KPF raised and fired a burst of PKM machine gun fire at them. This

Top of the rocky abutment. Reilly is wounded while seeking cover to left of pointed rocks in the center.



Cooper is lying on the flat rocks, burrowed up close to the scrub evergreen when Reilly comes “sliding into him” from the lower right “like a baseball player going for third base.”

prompted the best enemy shooter to raise up. I shot him in the head. It was a small victory. I told Paul that I just got the guy who shot us.”⁴⁸

“Following that announcement, Reilly grabbed my CAT [Combat Application Tourniquet] and applied it to the nearest leg with the entry wound, not realizing that the bullet had exited my right leg. That was the most serious problem. I had shifted it underneath me to apply some pressure. I knew that I was bleeding out because I kept drifting in and out of consciousness. As luck would have it, Brad did not have a tourniquet,” said Cooper.⁴⁹

TSgt Reilly requested an SF medic because he realized that his “medic skills were not going to pay the rent.... Paul began coaching me through the treatment of his wounds. I had never done any live-tissue stuff before and was a little overwhelmed by the injuries . . . I chose the left leg since it was completely opened up and I could see down into it. For the holes in his right leg, I used a Curlex [bandage] and just tried to hold pressure on the holes.”⁵⁰

Since Reilly had called for assistance, CPT Dandridge looked to his medic, SSG Day, to provide help to the two wounded men embattled on a razorback finger 150 meters away.⁵¹ CW2 Stencill, a former 18D medic, was pinned down by gunfire directly above Cooper and Reilly and had been fighting his natural instinct to rush down and deal with the medical emergency below him. SFC Underhill reminded him several times that he was now the second in command, not the team medic.⁵² Since Dandridge had no communications with SSG Day, it was Stencill (above and to the right of Reilly and Cooper below) who called Day and two KPF Afghans up to his position. He reiterated the commander’s stipulation that it had to be voluntary. He explained that MSG Cooper needed medical attention badly. Then Stencill pointed down to where he thought Reilly and Cooper were located, indicating the reverse left side of the southerly finger. He asked SSG Day if he could skirt around to the left, drop down into the ravine, and come up behind the two wounded

Americans from below.⁵³

With all of his movement, pointing, and gesturing, Stencill attracted enemy fire to his position. Despite that, Day nodded his head and took off at a trot toward a small bowl that led into the ravine; the two KPF followed close behind.⁵⁴ “The scene was straight out of the movies,” said CPT Dandridge. “As Day stood up, he came under such a heavy barrage of fire that no one could see him. He fired several magazines and moved out. PKM and AK rounds kicked up a dust storm all around as Jubal [Day] and the Afghans disappeared down into the adjacent bowl.”⁵⁵

TSgt Reilly did have his radios. In between shooting and treating Cooper, he passed medical conditions to CPT Dandridge above. Guided by Reilly’s directions, CW2 Stencill and SFC Underhill lobbed grenades down the hill toward the enemy positions. At one point, desperate for help, Reilly asked Dandridge to pull everyone back so that he could call in the A-10s to attack the enemy in the ravine. Knowing the difficulty that the jet fighter bombers would have identifying friendlies in the convoluted and steep terrain, the detachment commander denied the request.⁵⁶ This call was monitored by the A-10s and the UH-60s orbiting overhead.

The Black Hawk crews knew that two wounded Americans were separated from the main element and only one of them was keeping the four enemy fighters at bay. The enemy had a PDK machinegun. The heavy volume of fire being directed at the positions closest to Cooper and Reilly prevented any ground reinforcement and delayed medical help getting to them. The desperate situation prompted the pilots in the loitering SKILLFUL 31 to take action.⁵⁷

Realizing the two wounded and isolated Americans would be quickly overrun when the enemy “bum rushed” them, Chief Warrant Officer 3 (CW3) Chris Palumbo and CW2 Steven Burr, piloting SKILLFUL 31, radioed that they were going to try a CASEVAC (casualty evacuation). “When you hear the desperation in that voice on the radio, someone saying that they need you there, you kind of feel helpless,” said Palumbo. “You could see the bad guys. I wasn’t going to leave our guys bleeding on the side of the hill.”⁵⁸

CW3 Palumbo told SKILLFUL 12 to assume a high hover and tell Fire Base Salerno to prepare to accept wounded. Then, they swooped down to establish a blocking position between Reilly and Cooper and the enemy. At one point, enemy fighters ran underneath the helicopter as it searched for the embattled Americans. It took a couple of low passes before the crew managed to spot Reilly “kind of buried under a rock.” Dropping down to twenty feet, the right gunner, Specialist Four (SP4) John Irick, could only see Reilly, but Palumbo spotted several enemy fighters in the trees rushing up toward them from the backside of the finger.⁵⁹ MSG Cooper remembered seeing the belly of the Black Hawk almost on top of him.⁶⁰

SP4 Ryan “Rick” Pummill, the crew chief and left door gunner, was able to fire straight down into two enemy

positions directly opposite Reilly and Cooper by leaning out over his M-60D machinegun. As he rained down a fusillade of bullets, every enemy fighter in the vicinity responded back in kind. Cooper, Reilly, and several ODA 163 soldiers watched as the rounds “dusted and sparked” off the armor-plated belly of the Black Hawk as Pummill and the enemy slugged it out. Then SP4 Pummill, hit in the face by shrapnel from a floor plate shattered by an armor-piercing round, was knocked back into the aircraft. When CW3 Palumbo heard Pummill cry out, “I’m hit,” he yanked on the collective to lift the UH-60 up, spun it left while nosing it down, and tore away down the finger out of range. The crewmen were shouting so loudly that they did not need their intercom system.⁶¹ The two pilots realized that their first effort was not enough to keep the enemy off the two wounded Americans. A CASEVAC was clearly out of the question.⁶²

Well clear of hostile fire and with SP4 Irick, the right door gunner, reporting that Pummill was not seriously wounded, CW3 Palumbo loop-rolled the UH-60 and roared back into the fight, positioning the helicopter so Irick could engage the enemy from the right side of the helicopter. Irick, firing straight down again, clearly dominated the shootout this time. But “we took a buttload of bullets,” recalled Palumbo. “The armor-piercing ones were zipping through the floor of the aircraft pretty good. It felt like sand being thrown against the back of my helmet. The rounds were exploding behind our heads and the fragments were splattering the backs of our helmets.”⁶³ TSgt Reilly provided his view: “They were so close that I could see the pilot’s eyes. Enemy ground fire was sparking off the rotors and belly but they just stayed there until the threat was gone.”⁶⁴

After expending nearly 1,800 rounds of 7.62 ammunition, Palumbo radioed that his machineguns were empty. He was also low on fuel and suspected hydraulic leaks because the helicopter was beginning to respond sluggishly. SKILLFUL 12 loitered in overwatch close to the contact site. To avoid setting the damaged SKILLFUL 31 down near the firefight, Palumbo and Burr “milked it back to Salerno.” More leaks sprang out while refueling and the pilots shut the helicopter down. The tough Black Hawk had withstood at least thirty-one small-arms hits during the crew’s fight to prevent a determined enemy from overrunning two wounded Americans.⁶⁵ The brave actions of SKILLFUL 31 distracted the enemy fighters enough to enable SSG Day and two KPF Afghans to cross open areas unscathed and to get below Cooper and Reilly undetected.⁶⁶

When SKILLFUL 31 left, TSgt Reilly refocused on keeping the enemy fighters at bay. Whenever Cooper regained consciousness and raised his head to talk, Reilly pushed it back down under cover. He was repeating the drill when SSG Day emerged behind him. The two KPF joined their compatriots about ten to twelve feet behind Reilly. Day dropped his aid bag, knelt down, and began checking the team sergeant. Quickly determining the bullet that left the “shark-bite sized” exit wound had actually broken

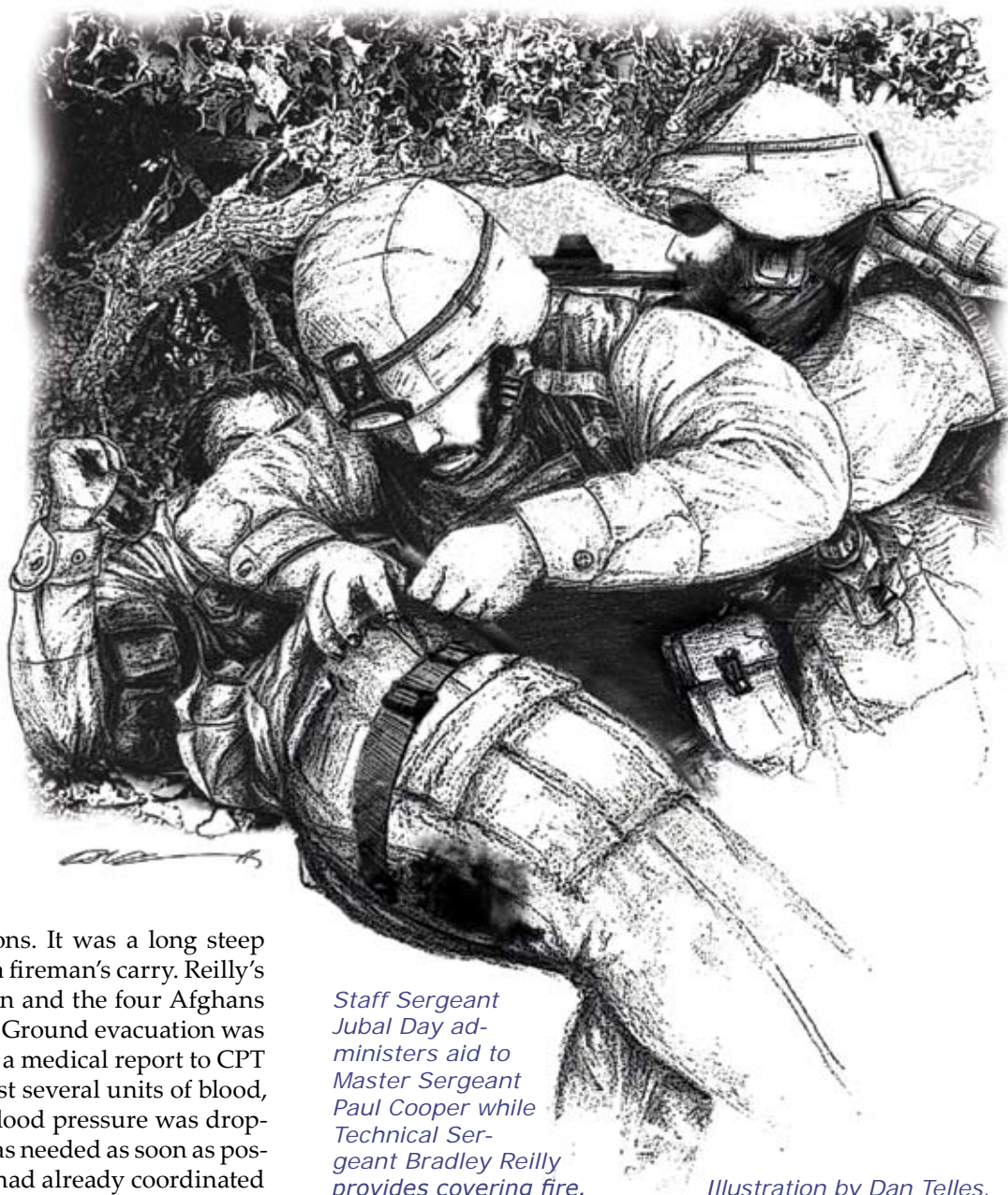
his right femur in half, causing massive internal bleeding, Day pressed his knee down hard into Cooper's groin while he applied a CAT to stop the arterial bleeding. "That little maneuver brought me up for air," said Cooper. "After Day checked my tourniquet, Reilly gave me some morphine. Then, Jubal inserted a nasal trumpet and methodically bandaged up my wounds."⁶⁷

Focused on the task at hand, Day ignored Reilly's constant warnings to keep his head down while he worked on MSG Cooper. Fifteen minutes later, the two had reinforced their position with the team sergeant's helmet and body armor and Cooper was ready for evacuation. Reilly repositioned the KPF to cover the flanks, putting the PDK gunner near Cooper's head. Then Reilly sat on his wounded foot to reduce the bleeding.⁶⁸

SSG Day evaluated his options. It was a long steep uphill climb to move Cooper in a fireman's carry. Reilly's foot would also slow them down and the four Afghans would have to cover their move. Ground evacuation was quickly cast aside. Reilly passed a medical report to CPT Dandridge: MSG Cooper had lost several units of blood, was unconsciousness, and his blood pressure was dropping. A helicopter MEDEVAC was needed as soon as possible.⁶⁹ The AOB and FOB staffs had already coordinated that request and were working on some replacement AH-64s and helicopters to carry in reinforcements.

Unknown to MSG Cooper and TSgt Reilly, several actions had already been initiated in response to the TIC report. MAJ Spartan had ODA 165 establish a blocking position on the Khowst-Gardez road just south of the ambush site to check all vehicles for fleeing enemy fighters ("squirters"). ODA 164 at Chapman Airfield was alerted to reinforce ODA 163.⁷⁰ ODA 166, on patrol in the Shah-e-khot Valley near Zermat, was the closest ("ten to twelve miles as the crow flies") to the firefight, but a mountain range 8,000-feet high effectively blocked it. The pass selected for its roadblock location was so remote and obscure that the team hired two children to show them where the pass was. The "road" on the map proved to be merely an animal trail with no signs of recent use. After advising the AOB of this situation, the team pulled back into the nearest village (Jichay) and established a blocking position.⁷¹

Having been directed to support the operation, LTC Norman Cooling, the 3/3 Marines commander, had mar-



Staff Sergeant Jubal Day administers aid to Master Sergeant Paul Cooper while Technical Sergeant Bradley Reilly provides covering fire.

Illustration by Dan Telles.

shaled a platoon of Marines and mounted them in eight vehicles. This element would establish another blocking position on the road just south of the ambush site and it was to be vectored into position by MAJ Spartan.⁷² "With everybody and his brother monitoring the fight, all listeners quickly became aware that CPT Dandridge had control of the situation. He was rock steady and calm on the radio. We realized that we could help him best by just working out his requests," said SFC Darren Goff*, the daytime operations noncommissioned officer in the AOB.⁷³ Spartan knew that the detachment commander had his hands full with multiple units in support, some which operated on different communications nets. He did a "fantastic job," said the AOB commander.⁷⁴

The FOB staff was coordinating artillery fire support, "racking and stacking" close air support, and arranging MEDEVAC, replacement AH-64s, and UH-60s to carry reinforcements through the CJSOTF and JTF at Bagram Airbase. The AOB to FOB message traffic was shifted to secure computer links and the FOB to CJSOTF traffic

was diverted to Red telephones to give ODA 163 satellite priority for operational command and control. "I was confident in the leadership of that detachment," said LTC Nilsson.⁷⁵

The airfield at Fire Base Salerno was a beehive of activity as relief was organized and properly sequenced to fly into the contact site. A pair of AH-64s were launched first. UH-60s, SKILLFUL 26 and 24, carrying seven U.S. Navy SEALs, accompanied DUSTOFF 53, a Black Hawk from the 68th Medical Company, to Chapman Airfield. It had become standard practice for the DUSTOFF aircraft to pick up an SF medic and an SF "shooter" to assist with defense during missions. First Lieutenant (1LT) Samuel Osborne*, the physician's assistant, and AOB Sergeant Major (SGM) Matthew Patton* climbed aboard DUSTOFF 53.⁷⁶

Some ODA 164 soldiers, the AOB operations officer, CW3 Jason Golden*, and KPF Afghans filled SKILLFUL 26 and 24.⁷⁷ The seven Navy SOF personnel, fully "kitted up" for combat, had been en route to Salerno for FRIES (Fast Rope Insertion-Extraction System) training when the platoon commander overheard the TIC reports. Navy Lieutenant (LT) Michael McGreevy convinced the TF Sabre watch officer to include his SEALs in the QRF. They were "off to the sound of the guns" instead of being left behind to watch their aircraft fly away.⁷⁸ CW3 Golden proved to be a big help, but the primary interest of CPT Dandridge was getting the MEDEVAC helicopter in and out safely.

Dandridge wanted to suppress enemy fire to the maximum extent possible during the MEDEVAC. It had been seventy long minutes since he had requested a MEDEVAC. Thus, when DUSTOFF 53 radioed in, "Two to three minutes out," ODA 163 and the KPF began firing and throwing everything they had—M-4 carbines, PDK machineguns, AK-47s, 40mm grenade launchers, and hand grenades—at known enemy positions in the valley in a sustained effort to suppress enemy fires.⁷⁹ Having received three different grid locations for the location of Reilly and Cooper, it took DUSTOFF 53 two "go-arounds" to confirm the right finger.⁸⁰ CW3 Travis White*, the flight mission commander in the left seat, quickly realized that they had to use the hoist with "jungle penetrator" to effect the rescue attempts—a dangerous and time-consuming maneuver. Considering the winds and best escape route if hit by enemy fire, White positioned the nose of his Black Hawk down the finger. This exposed the hoist and penetrator to the ravine from where the most enemy fire had come.⁸¹

SP4 David Perelli*, the crewchief, would lower the medic, SSG Michael Conrad*, armed with a 9mm Beretta pistol and a SKEDCO litter strapped to his shoulder and seated on the three-bladed penetrator, down to the ground. Even with TSgt Reilly guiding the helicopter up the narrow slope toward him, DUSTOFF 53 initially lowered SSG Conrad thirty-five feet down the reverse slope, only to discover that it had put him down on a dead enemy fighter. Conrad, heart pounding and giving frantic arm signals, was quickly reeled back up. Then,

CW3 White continued advancing up the ridgeline.⁸²

This time White waited until TSgt Reilly, directly underneath the helicopter, told him to lower the penetrator. Conrad came down again, unseated, and slipped the SKEDCO off while 1LT Osborne, SGM Patton, and SP4 Perelli up above scanned the immediate area for enemy fighters.⁸³ With the MEDEVAC on site, CPT Dandridge added the circling AH-64s and the loitering A-10s to his fire suppression plan. The A-10s orchestrated the "stacked up" aircraft to fly continuous parallel 30mm gun runs well clear of the ridgeline while pounding the valleys beyond with rockets. It was effective and DUSTOFF 53 reported only sporadic, ineffective fire around them.⁸⁴ On the ground, the two medics scrambled to get Cooper on the SKEDCO.

"They slid me onto a SKEDCO and then carried me to a large flat rock to strap me in. I felt like I was lying on a sacrificial altar. Day reinserted the nasal trumpet. In their haste to get me out of there, they misrouted two straps on the SKEDCO. When the hoist was activated, the tag line was jerked out of Conrad's hands and the SKEDCO went vertical. I began to slip down and out. The top chest strap tightened on my throat. I jerked my arms free and, crossing them, grabbed the sides as they reeled me up. Then Osborne and Patton were manhandling me into the aircraft. That was scary for me, but terrifying for everyone," remembered MSG Cooper.⁸⁵

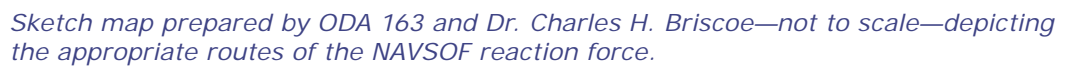
While Osborne examined Cooper, SSG Conrad and TSgt Reilly were hoisted up on the penetrator. The airman took a side back seat to give the medics plenty of room to work.⁸⁶ By this time the pilots had been hovering over the site for fourteen minutes.⁸⁷ "We must have been covered with some miracle force field," said CW3 White afterward. "Our aircraft and crew were never hit by enemy fire."⁸⁸

As soon as DUSTOFF 53 cleared the danger zone, Osborne tried to start an IV on Cooper but his veins had gone "flat." Then the two medics began applying an improvised splint on the gunshot-fractured femur. With SSG Conrad pulling on Cooper's feet, they used "good old manpower" to apply the splint.⁸⁹ The pain was so terrific that Cooper snapped to consciousness, sat bolt upright, and ripped out his nasal trumpet. By then the MEDEVAC was so close to the Salerno Forward Surgical Team site that it did not matter. TSgt Reilly refused a litter and with help hobbled to the triage area.⁹⁰ The fight was over for Cooper and Reilly, but it was still ongoing back at the contact site.

While DUSTOFF 53 was pinpointing MSG Cooper and TSgt Reilly, CPT Dandridge landed SKILLFUL 26 and 24 in the bowl area behind his positions. When SFC Underhill saw the SEALs disembark, he did not recognize their unusual helmets. He asked CW2 Stencil, "Who is that?" His answer was, "I think that they're on our side." Underhill responded, "Tell them where we are because I don't want to get shot by friendlies."⁹¹ Both aircraft had been warned during their approach that ODA 163, the KPF Afghans, the AH-64s, and the A-10s were laying down

Dandridge suspected that there was at least one enemy fighter alive and directed LT McGreevy and his element to conduct a sweep to the east and down through the ravine in front of his positions. The Navy platoon leader detached a three-man element to serve as an airborne reconnaissance force (with snipers aboard one UH-60) above and in front, as he led the remaining SEALs and three KPF Afghans down into the ravine to start the directed sweep. The second helicopter carrying ODA 164 and ODB personnel and some KPF Afghans established a blocking position beyond the ravine being swept by the SEALs in an attempt to catch any “squirters.”⁹³

In the meantime, SSG Day, the medic, and the four



Having worked the now-stopped traffic up and down both sides of the ambush site on the Gardez-Khowst road, ODA 165 located a wadi that went toward the ravine behind the contact site. "We had the police chief and some village elders with us to help identify dead fighters. The police chief pointed out where the Soviets had mined the area. By following the wadi, we got within a half mile of the contact site. Then, with our ASF on either flank, we walked into the narrow ravine, pausing to investigate the adjoining ravines, until we estimated that we were below the major contact site. Then, we divided up into groups to climb up the ravines and fin-



PKM machinegun in the ravine below the reverse slope enemy position opposite Reilly and Cooper. Note the rocky, rugged terrain.

gers leading to top. It wasn't until we got near the crests that we began finding enemy bodies—nine of the twelve counted by the SEALs—and military equipment strewn about. As we began recording the SSE information, there was a commotion,” said CPT Jay Huske*.

One of the ASF had spotted an Afghan coming down a draw toward them and several of the ASF grabbed him. This was less than thirty minutes since the exfiltration had started at the top. Although the man was wearing clean clothes, he was otherwise dirty and wore heavily dust-coated sandals. His reason for being there was to collect a debt owed by an uncle. The local Afghans accompanying ODA 165 claimed not to know him. The elders were more interested in burying the dead before sundown. The man was detained. When the SSE was complete, he was delivered to Gardez for interrogation.⁹⁹

By then, all U.S. and Afghan security forces directly involved in the contact had returned to Chapman Airfield and the forces in blocking positions were returning to their home bases. The AOB debrief finished in time for the members of ODA 163 to get over to Fire Base Salerno to see a stabilized MSG Cooper (after five pints of blood) and TSgt Reilly before the two were flown to Germany. The wounded KPF Afghan returned to duty in a week.¹⁰⁰

In summary, a well-equipped, tough, and determined group of al-Qaeda-associated militia fighters was eliminated. There were thirteen confirmed enemy killed in action. Many wore U.S. Army BDU jackets, load-bearing ammunition vests, and sturdy hiking shoes. They carried an FM radio with extra batteries and binoculars. Also captured were eight AK-47 assault rifles, two SVD sniper rifles, two PKM machineguns, and two RPG-7s with substantial ammunition. An experienced, well-trained, and well-led SF team carried the day on 11 April 2005, at 8,200 feet in the rugged mountains of Khowst-Gardez, Afghanistan. During several subsequent QRF missions, ODA 163 acquitted itself well.

The success, however, on 11 April 2005, was achieved by a well-coordinated combined joint operations team

effort at all levels by all four U.S. defense forces and Afghan security forces. “Everyone contributed to the fight and performed their roles like professionals,” said LTC Nilsson, FOB 12 commander. “In my opinion, the battalion fought the fight very well. The FOB rated 1 percent of the credit, the AOB rated 10 percent, and ODA 163 merited 89 percent for this one. ODA 165 got an honorable mention for the SSE. But the real heroes in the action were the pilots and aircrew of SKILLFUL 31.”¹⁰¹

SSG Jubal Day, TSgt Brad Reilly, and CW3 Chris Palumbo were awarded Silver Stars for their valorous actions. Various other decorations were recommended. Three Navy SEALs involved in this action were later killed during Operation RED WINGS on 28 June 2005.¹⁰² ♠

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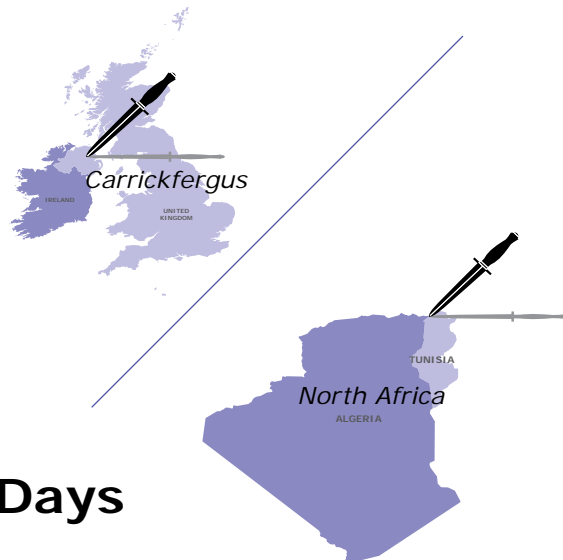
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- 96 Boatswain Mate 2 Mack Brown*, classified interview by Richard Green, 20 April 2005, Bagram Airbase, Afghanistan, digital recording, USSOCOM History Office Classified Files, MacDill AFB, FL.
- 97 NSWTU-AFG OPSUM; PMR ODA163.
- 98 Silver, Green, and Partin, "Operation ENDURING FREEDOM: Troops in Contact in the Khowst Province, 11 April 2005 (S)," 43.
- 99 Huske interview. The detainee was "connected." He was a principal Taliban leader's mullah's son and associated with a madrassa in Pakistan. Working with the police to circulate photos of the dead al-Qaeda-associated militiamen among village elders, ODA 165 confirmed that many of the enemy killed in action were from the local area.
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Rangers in World War II:

Part I—The Formation and Early Days

by Kenneth Finlayson and Robert W. Jones Jr.



THE 75th Ranger Regiment, consisting of three battalions and the regimental headquarters, evolved from the experiences of the U.S. Army in World War II. At the onset of the War, the Army had no units capable of performing specialized missions. By the end of the War, the Army fielded seven Ranger infantry battalions (the 1st through the 6th and the little known 29th) that conducted operations in North Africa, the Mediterranean, France, and the Pacific (the Philippines). The purpose of this article is to explain how the Rangers came to be in WWII, in particular those units formed in Europe and then committed to North Africa. Future issues of *Veritas* will include articles on Ranger operations in Sicily and Italy, France, and the Philippines (the 6th Ranger Battalion).

Darby and the 1st Rangers are Formed

The U.S. Army did not have special operations units in 1941. That quickly changed when America declared war on the Axis and entered WWII. Brigadier General Lucian K. Truscott Jr., the U.S. Army liaison with the British Combined Operations Headquarters, proposed to Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall on 26 May 1942 that "we undertake immediately the organization of an American unit along [British] Commando lines."¹ A cable quickly followed from the War Department to Major General Russell P. Hartle, who was commanding the U.S. Army Forces in Northern Ireland, authorizing the activation of the 1st Ranger unit.²

The original idea was that the 1st Ranger Battalion would be a temporary organization to disseminate combat experience to new American troop units.³ The battalion would have detachments temporarily attached to British Commando units when they raided German-held countries in Europe. Then, the combat-tested, or "blooded," soldiers would return to their units to share their experiences.⁴ Soldiers would be cycled through Commando training and return to the United States to train additional troops.⁵

Lieutenant General Truscott selected the title "Ranger" because the title "Commando" belonged to the British. He wanted a more fitting American moniker. "I selected 'Rangers' because few words have a more glamorous connotation in American military history. . . . It was therefore fitting that the organization destined to be the first of the American ground forces to battle Germans on the European continent in World War II should be called Rangers—in compliment to those in American history who exemplified such high standards of individual courage, initiative, determination and ruggedness, fighting ability, and achievement."⁶ While Truscott was a student of military history in 1940, the movie "Northwest Passage," starring Spencer Tracy and Robert Young, was popular and may have contributed to his choice of name. Based on the Kenneth Roberts' novel, the film extolled the exploits of Roger's Rangers in the French and Indian War with Spencer Tracy playing Major Robert Rogers.⁷

Once the decision was made to form a Ranger battalion, the next task was to select a commander. After some deliberation, Major General Hartle nominated his own aide-de-camp, Captain William Orlando Darby. An artillery officer, Darby had cavalry and infantry operational experience as well as amphibious training. Truscott was receptive, finding the young officer to be "outstanding in appearance, possessed of a most attractive personality, and he was keen, intelligent, and filled with enthusiasm."⁸ His judgment of suitability proved accurate. The 31-year-old Darby, a 1933 graduate of West Point, demonstrated an exceptional ability to gain the confidence of his superiors and earn the deep devotion of his men.⁹

Promoted to major based on his selection for battalion command, Darby immediately began organizing his new combat unit. Soon flyers calling for volunteers appeared on U.S. Army bulletin boards throughout Northern Ireland.¹⁰ Darby "spent the next dozen days [personally] interviewing the officer volunteers and, with their help, some two thousand volunteers from V Corps . . . in Northern Ireland—looking especially for athletic indi-



The V Corps, 1st Armored Division, and 34th Infantry Division provided the majority of volunteers for the 1st Ranger battalion in Northern Ireland. About 2,000 soldiers volunteered, but only 575 were selected to begin training.

viduals in good physical condition.”¹¹ The recruits, ranging in age from seventeen to thirty-five, came from every part of the United States. Most of the Ranger recruits joined because they wanted to be part of an elite force. Some units did try to unload misfits and troublemakers, but they were usually rejected and sent back.¹²

The 1st Ranger Battalion was formed with volunteers from the following units: 281 from the 34th Infantry Division, 104 from the 1st Armored Division, 43 from the Antiaircraft Artillery units, 48 from the V Corps Special Troops, and 44 from the Northern Ireland base troops.¹³ After a strenuous selection program to weed out unfit soldiers, Truscott activated the 1st Ranger Battalion on 19 June 1942, at Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland, a town twenty miles north of Belfast.¹⁴

With considerable foresight, Darby was allowed a 10 percent overstrength for rejections and injuries in the tough training program to come. Five hundred seventy-five recruits began training at Carrickfergus. Darby could only retain 473 (26 officers and 447 men). These became the original members of the 1st Ranger Battalion.¹⁵

The Rangers were organized almost exactly like the British Commandos. The term “commando” connoted a battalion-sized unit of specially trained soldiers and, at the same time, the individual soldiers were called “com-

mandos.” Each company had a headquarters of three (company commander, first sergeant, and runner) and two infantry platoons of thirty men each. The battalion consisted of a headquarters company with six line companies of sixty-three to sixty-seven men. The Ranger battalions sacrificed administrative self-sufficiency for foot and amphibious mobility.¹⁶ Once the recruitment, organization, and assignments had been completed, the Rangers headed for Scotland for phase one of their training.

In July 1942, Darby and the 1st Ranger Battalion started three months of training at the famed Commando Training Center in Scotland. After getting off the train in the town of Fort William, the recruits began an exhausting seven-mile forced march to their camp in the shadow of Achnacarry Castle. The road march set the tone for the next three months of rigorous training. British Lieutenant Colonel Charles Vaughan, MBE, commanded a cadre of battle-hardened Commando instructors, who taught Commando warfare to the Rangers. Under the watchful eye of the Commando cadre, the Ranger recruits underwent a strenuous physical fitness program that included obstacle courses and more speed marches through the rugged Scottish countryside. They received weapons training with individual and crew-served weapons, hand-to-hand combat, street fighting, and patrolling. They also conducted night operations and drilled in small-boat handling. Realism was stressed, including

1st Lieutenant Alfred Nelson leads B Company, 1st Ranger Battalion on a training road march near Achnacarry, Scotland, July 1942. Road marches were a staple of Ranger training. Note the World War I-style helmets and “combat” overalls which were meant to be the field uniform for infantrymen in WWII.

1st Ranger Battalion organization chart. About half the size of a standard infantry battalion the Rangers traded mass for agility and firepower. The six other Ranger Battalions were organized in the same manner.

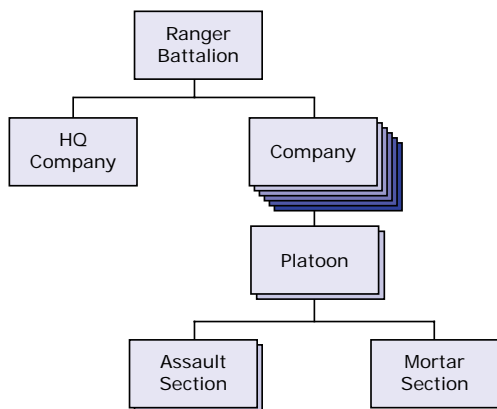


Photo courtesy of the National Archives



Photos courtesy of the National Archives

Brigadier General Lucian Truscott Jr. (center with riding boots) and Major William O. Darby (pointing) inspect C Company, 1st Ranger Battalion on 2 September 1942 at Dundee, Scotland. The company commander, Captain William Martin is on the left.

the use of live ammunition—something unheard of in U.S. Army units at the time. Five hundred of the six hundred volunteers that accompanied Darby to Achnacarry completed the Commando training with flying colors. One Ranger was killed and several were wounded by live fire.¹⁷

In August 1942, the 1st Ranger Battalion moved to Argyle, Scotland, for amphibious training operations with the British Royal Navy. The battalion next moved to Dundee where the Rangers were billeted in private homes. They practiced attacking the pillboxes and coastal defenses set up on the small islands off the Scottish coast to hone their skills in raiding and amphibious assaults.¹⁸ The first test of the Ranger readiness for combat would shortly occur.

Dieppe Raid

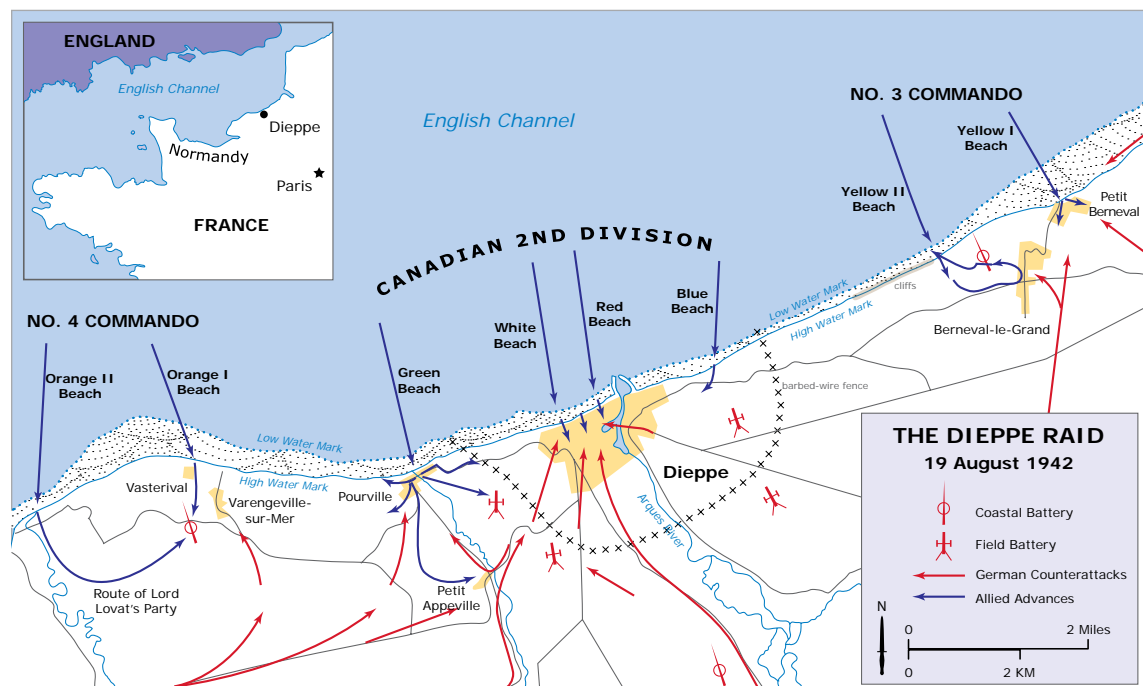
While the 1st Ranger Battalion was in training, fifty-one Rangers were chosen for a special mission—the Dieppe



Officers of the 1st Ranger Battalion in Scotland. Captain Roy Murray, the first from the left in the front row, would later become the senior Ranger on the Dieppe Raid, F Company commander, and 4th Ranger Battalion commander.

Raid. Forty-one enlisted men and four officers were to be attached to two British Commandos (the British call their Commando battalions No. 1 Commando, No. 2 Commando, etc.), the rest went to various Canadian units. These Rangers would be the first American ground soldiers to see action against the Germans in occupied Europe. The Allied command hoped that the raid would ease the pressure on the Soviets. The real reason was to test the defenses of the port. The 2nd Canadian Division was to assault directly across the beach into the town of Dieppe. The Germans had emplaced coastal artillery batteries on both flanks of the city and built defensive positions within the town itself. Two British Commandos, Nos. 3 and 4, accompanied by fifty-one American Rangers were to seize and destroy the batteries.¹⁹ On the night of 19 August 1942, No. 4 Commando landed and successfully destroyed the battery west of Dieppe before withdrawing.²⁰ En route to their designated target, the landing flotilla carrying the No. 3 Commando was dispersed by German “E-boats” [fast torpedo boats similar

Map of Dieppe Raid. While the Commandos hit the artillery batteries on the flanks, the Canadians landed in the center assaulting directly into the town. The German garrison was awakened by some strafing runs five to ten minutes before the landing, thereby allowing them to man the defenses.



to an American patrol torpedo (PT) boat]. Only a fraction of the force made it ashore.²¹ A group of Commandos engaged the Germans, preventing the battery from firing on the Allied fleet. Meanwhile, the Canadian-led main assault turned into a disaster. Captain Roy Murray, the senior Ranger on the raid stated:

The problem was that in all of our activities we've always been used to night raids and surprise. There was no preparation before this attack on Dieppe. And the cliffs on either side of Dieppe had many German machine gun emplacements, and they had mortars in the center of town. And since we were supposedly going in quietly, we found at the last minute it had been decided that aircraft would go in with just using their machine guns five minutes before we attacked. The net result was that we awakened all the Germans and had them ready for us when we came in. The Canadians did a great job—very courageous. But they were enfiladed by the fire and by the mortars. And the only cover they had on this beach at low tide was the tanks that came in with them. The unfortunate part of having the tanks coming on that beach was that the exits from the beach were three stairways from the beach up about twenty feet to the esplanade at the top. The stairways were not really suitable for tank efforts. So the tanks stayed on the beach, and they got knocked out.²²

The Canadians suffered 3,400 casualties out of the 5,000 troops who landed including 600 dead, 1,900 prisoners of war, and 300 missing.²³ Three Rangers were killed and several were captured. However, all earned the respect of the Commandos.²⁴ The hard lessons learned at Dieppe proved invaluable to the success of Operation OVERLORD in Normandy two years later.²⁵ Following the raid, the 1st Ranger Battalion was alerted to prepare for the invasion of North Africa. Almost simultaneously, a second Ranger unit was formed in England.

The 29th Ranger Battalion (Provisional)

Most soldiers have never heard of the 29th Ranger Battalion (Provisional). The European Theater Headquarters wanted to retain a Ranger presence in England. The 29th Ranger Battalion was formed there on 20 December 1942, shortly after the 1st Rangers shipped out for the invasion of North Africa. Infantry Major Randolph Milholland formed the battalion with volunteers from the 29th Infantry Division, a National Guard division with elements from Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.²⁶ Like Darby's Rangers, the 29th



29th Rangers tab worn with the 29th Infantry Division patch. The tab and patch were worn on both shoulders.



Photo courtesy of the National Archives

Major Randolph Milholland, commanding officer of the 29th Ranger Battalion (Provisional), with Major General Leonard Gerow, commanding general of the 29th Infantry Division, in June 1943. Unlike the other Rangers, the 29th Rangers wore the paratrooper "jump boots" even though they were not on airborne status.

Ranger Battalion trained at the British Commando Center at Achnacarry, Scotland. After completing five weeks of rigorous training, the battalion was attached to Lord Lovat's No. 4 Commando for additional unit training.²⁷

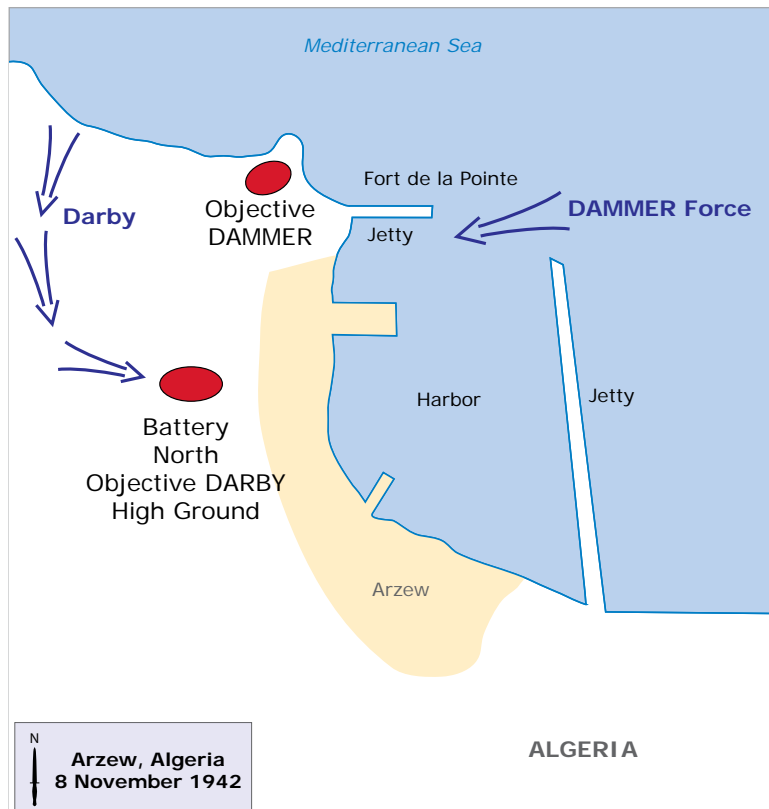
While attached to No. 4 Commando, several of the 29th Rangers participated in combat raids and reconnaissance missions into Norway. During a raid on a German radar station on the island of Ile d'Ouessant off the coast of France, the 29th Rangers acquitted themselves well.²⁸ On 20 September 1943, one Ranger company moved to Dover to participate in a 100-man raid in the Pas de Calais area of France. They were to destroy German coastal guns. Before they could go, however, the raid was canceled.²⁹ That disappointment was followed by a bigger bombshell: the 29th Infantry Division commander, Major General Charles H. Gerhardt, ordered the unit disbanded on 15 October 1943. The Rangers returned to their original units and fought with the 29th Infantry Division from D-Day until the end of the war.³⁰ In some respects, the 29th Rangers fulfilled the original intent for creating a Ranger battalion—to spread experience and training throughout the division. With the demise of the 29th Rangers, the first large-scale Ranger participation in combat would occur during the invasion of North Africa.

Operation TORCH: The Rangers in North Africa

The 1st Ranger Battalion spearheaded Operation TORCH, the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942. The battalion conducted a night landing with LCAs (landing craft–assault) at the Algerian port of Arzew on 8 November 1942. At about 0100 hours, the landing craft carrying two Ranger companies (A and B) under the battalion executive officer, Major Herman Dammer, stealthily entered the inner harbor. As the landing craft touched the dock, the Rangers jumped out and ran down the quay, directly into an attack of *Fort de la Pointe*. In about fifteen minutes, “Dammer Force” had captured the fort and had sixty surprised French prisoners, including the commandant in his pajamas.³¹ “Darby Force,” consisting of C, D, and E companies headed for the *Batterie du Nord*, whose four 105mm cannons overlooked the harbor approach. For the mission, Company D served as a mortar company using four 81mm mortars to support the attack.³² The Rangers suffered two dead and eight wounded in the attacks. The battery and the nearby fort were captured.³³ The successful Ranger missions helped to open the way for the 1st Infantry Division to capture Oran.³⁴

The Rangers remained in Arzew for the next two months. Major Darby was the town “mayor” and the 1st Rangers served as the military government and security force for the town.³⁵ Rather than rest and refit as an occupation force, Darby increased the operational tempo of the training with forced marches and marksmanship training. Darby stated that, “For the next two months I marched the men for long distances on short rations, so that the training in Scotland seemed easy in comparison.”³⁶ His Rangers agreed that the training at Arzew was more physically demanding than at the Commando

LCA transporting Rangers to Arzew.



The seizure of Arzew, Algeria, was the 1st Ranger Battalion's first unit battle in WWII. Dammer Force came into the harbor and attacked the fort directly through the town. Darby Force assaulted the main battery.

Training Center.³⁷ A rumor that the unit would remain in North Africa to train inexperienced infantrymen caused a flurry of transfers.³⁸ The Rangers received five officers and one hundred enlisted to replace their losses on 26 January 1943, just in time for the next combat action.³⁹

On 1 February 1943, the battalion boarded thirty-two C-47 transports and was airlifted to Youk-Les-Bains Airfield (near Tebessa).⁴⁰ Attached to the II Corps, the Rangers were to plan a series of raids against the Italians and Germans in Tunisia. Their first objective was Sened Station. On the night of 12 February, Companies A, E, and F, marched across eight miles of difficult terrain, “. . . each Ranger carrying a C ration, a canteen of water, and a shelter half.”⁴¹ The Rangers then camouflaged themselves with shelter halves and brush during the day to blend into the terrain. The next night the Rangers moved another four miles to get behind the Italian battle position. Just before midnight, the Ranger companies attacked with fixed bayonets. The Rangers drove the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment off the position, capturing an antitank gun and five machineguns, killing seventy-five, and taking eleven prisoners.⁴² Ranger casualties for the operation were one killed and ten wounded.⁴³

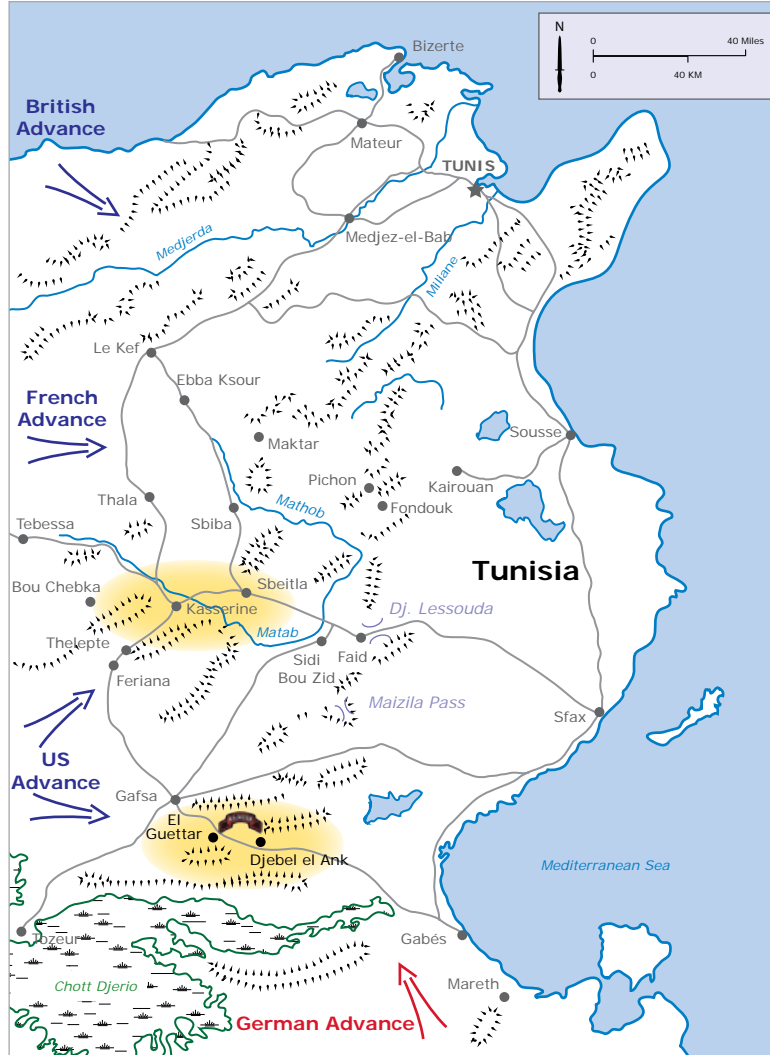
Their second mission was to seize the Djebel el Ank pass, key high ground near El Guettar. Darby stated that “with El Guettar in hand, General Allen [the 1st Infantry Division commander] could develop his plan of attack against the heights to the east and southeast. The pass at Djebel el Ank had to be taken first in order to anchor the division's left flank.”⁴⁴ On 20 March 1943, the 1st Ranger Battalion, with mortars and engineers attached,



Major Darby in Arzew, Algeria. As the town "mayor," he used a motorcycle to attend meetings.

force-marched for ten miles at night across mountainous terrain to get into position. Just before dawn, the Rangers swarmed down into the enemy positions surprising the Italians from the rear. The assault cleared the El Guettar Pass and captured over one thousand prisoners.⁴⁵ The capture of Djebel el Ank Pass and El Guettar enabled Lieutenant General George S. Patton's II Corps to launch its attack on Tunisia. For this action, the 1st Ranger Battalion received its first Presidential Unit Citation and Lieutenant Colonel Darby was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.⁴⁶

Based on the successes of the 1st Ranger Battalion in North Africa, Darby was directed to form two additional Ranger battalions. With cadre from the 1st Battalion, the 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions were activated and trained at Nemours, Algeria, in April 1943. The 1st Battalion was reconstituted with the original A and B Companies, the core of the 3rd Battalion came from C and D Companies, and the core of the 4th Battalion came from E and F Companies.⁴⁷ Darby, his officers, and his non-commissioned officers received hundreds of combat-tested soldiers from the Seventh Army units. Major Herman Dammer assumed command of the 3rd Battalion, Major Roy Murray the 4th Battalion, and Darby remained as the commander of the 1st Battalion. Darby was, in effect, in command of what became known as the "Darby Ranger Force." Because the Army still considered the Ranger



The Rangers seized the key passes of Djebel el Ank Pass and El Guettar, Tunisia. Seizure of the strategic terrain allowed General Patton's II Corps to attack, eventually seizing Tunisia.

battalions as provisional temporary units, manpower was not allocated for a force headquarters.⁴⁸ The three Ranger battalions then began an arduous three-week training program to prepare the newly formed units for Operation HUSKY, the Allied invasion of Sicily.⁴⁹

The intent of this and future articles is not to provide an all-encompassing history of the Ranger battalions. Some excellent books have already been written. The reason for this article is two-fold: first, to inform soldiers about Ranger history and heritage; and second, to stimulate interest and oral history contributions from Ranger veterans. The next article of this series will cover the three Ranger battalions' role in Sicily and Italy, through the battle of Cisterna. ♣

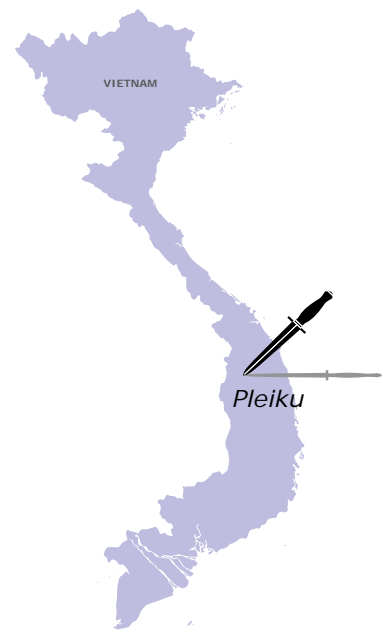


II Corps shoulder patch.

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Attack on the Pleiku Radio Station

by Robert W. Jones Jr.

AN integral part of the U.S. Army involvement in Vietnam was Psychological Operations (PSYOP). By 1968, the PSYOP campaign was being coordinated by the 4th PSYOP Group. Products were disseminated by a variety of methods, one being radio broadcasts. This article focuses on the radio station operated by the 7th PSYOP Detachment in Pleiku and an enemy attack in March 1968 that temporarily silenced its broadcasts. It is also the story of one soldier, First Lieutenant Michal A. Merkel, one

of many PSYOP soldiers who served in Vietnam and who was killed during the 24 March 1968 attack.

In late 1967, U.S. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) placed a 50,000-watt AM radio transmitter in Pleiku to broadcast to the northern provinces of South Vietnam. "The Voice of the Army and the People of Vietnam" became one of the most powerful radio transmitters in the country.¹ Still, the radio station was a "bare bones" PSYOP operation created with modular vans, maintenance vans, and 2½-ton trucks. The equipment had been flown in from Okinawa, the home of the 7th PSYOP Group. To help set up the station, two civilian radio technicians, Mr. Bill Hamby

and Mr. Bill Howard, flew in from the Sacramento Army Depot, California. For protection, the equipment was partially dug in and barricaded with dirt-filled 55-gallon drums covered with sandbags. The "Voice" became operational in December 1967.²

While it was in an ideal location for broadcasting, the site was remote and tactically exposed. The radio station was essentially an outpost—it was not inside any unit's defensive perimeter. As such, the small compound was very vulnerable to attack. Only barbed wire and concertina fences surrounded the outlying compound. A single wooden guard tower provided early warning. It was guarded by a Vietnamese Army (ARVN) squad. The 23rd ARVN Division was responsible for outer perimeter security in Pleiku. What distinguished the compound from the other American facilities in Pleiku was the 250-foot radio antenna. It quickly became a Viet Cong (VC) rocket and mortar aiming post and rounds were received almost daily.³

In the darkness of Saturday night, 23 March 1968, a team of VC sappers kept edging closer and closer to the American perimeter. Their target, while physically small, had a tremendous capacity to send broadcasts. While aimed at the northern part of II Corps and I Corps, this station could be heard in North Vietnam. The 250-foot tall radio antenna stuck up like a giant aiming stake that oriented the camouflaged demolition men as they silently approached the outside defenses. The American radio station was a thorn in the Communists' side because "Voice of the Army" broadcasted well into North Vietnam. The enemy was determined to silence it. At approximately 0215 hours, 24 March 1968, about twenty Communist

Various PSYOP units from the 7th PSYOP Group in Okinawa, Japan, had done temporary duty service in Vietnam since 1965. By 1967, the demand for PSYOP led to the formation of the 4th PSYOP Group in December 1967. The 4th PSYOP Group was formed from the existing 6th PSYOP Battalion and its companies already serving separately in Vietnam. The 7th PSYOP Group remained on Okinawa, responsible for the rest of Asia. Still, it continued to provide assistance to Vietnam.

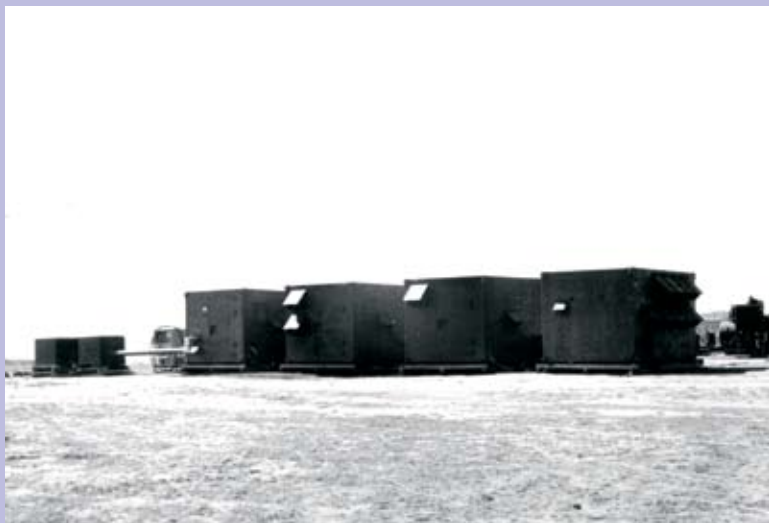
4th PSYOP
Group Distinctive Unit
Insignia



7th PSYOP
Group Distinctive Unit
Insignia



MACV shoulder patch.



The radio station main component, the TRT-22 before (above) and after (above right) force protection is added.



View of the force protection for the radio system. The 55-gallon drums were filled with dirt. Two rows of drums served as the base with a third row on top to protect the facility from rocket and mortar fire.



Installing the generator power distribution system. The generators provided the power for the 50,000 watt radio station.

By early 1968, the area around Pleiku had become a huge cluster of bases. Within a 15-kilometer circle of Pleiku city were compounds and base camps for the ARVN II Corps Headquarters, MACV II Corps Advisory Group, 4th Infantry Division, the 23rd ARVN Division, the 20th Engineer Brigade, the Pleiku Air Force Base, and several Special Forces units. In perspective, the area was the home to 18,000 to 25,000 American and Vietnamese soldiers.



Soldiers of the 7th PSYOP Group take a break while building the site. Civilian radio technician Bill Hamby is at the right.



A variety of major military headquarters were located in and around Pleiku, a major city in central South Vietnam.



View of the completed radio station from the guard tower. The TRT-22 transmitting modules are in the center of the stacked 55-gallon drum barrier. The 250-foot antenna base is clearly visible. To the left of the photo are the generators and the generator mechanic's shed.



Pleiku radio site perimeter activity. The M48 tank had broken down on the road passing the compound. Both ARVN and US units patrolled the Pleiku area around the radio station. Also visible is a section of the barbed-wire fence around the site.



Wooden guard tower at the site. The tower was manned solely by PSYOP personnel.



Tent for the ARVN guards. A squad of ARVN guarded the entrance to the station. Internal security was provided by the PSYOP soldiers. In the right rear of the photo are the generator sets.



One of the TRT-22 modules—the soldier leaning into the door is First Lieutenant Michal Merkel.



Team bunker being built at the radio station. This is the bunker where the team gathered during the attack.



Photo courtesy of Douglas Elwell

The AM single frequency radios were dropped by small parachute over North and South Vietnam.

The radio station was a critical component of the American and Vietnamese PSYOP campaign. The Americans bought tens of thousands of small battery-powered transistor radios and distributed them all over the country so that people could listen to the broadcasts. The first radios had fixed frequencies and thus could be easily jammed by the Communists. Later U.S. Army PSYOP provided tunable transistor radios, so that listeners could change stations when Radio Hanoi began jamming on a specific frequency.



Example of a PSYOP booklet dropped over North Vietnam explaining how to use the accompanying transistor radio.



sappers broke through the wire surrounding the radio station as a barrage of B-40 rockets hit the compound. The rockets awoke the sleeping American soldiers of the 7th PSYOP Detachment (Provisional). Occasional mortar and B-40 rocket harassment fire was common at night, but this was to be an extraordinary attack.⁴

The explosions prompted Captain Michael Jordan, Mobile Advisory Team 21, and First Lieutenant Michal Merkel, the 7th PSYOP Detachment commander, to put on flak jackets and grab their weapons. "Since there were so many rockets falling between the bunker and the sleeping huts, we determined that it would be best to remain where we were," said Jordan.⁵ Suddenly a rocket slammed through the corrugated metal roof of the building and exploded, seriously wounding Merkel. Jordan, wounded in the left leg and face, administered first aid to Merkel in the darkened hut. Then, Jordan dragged Merkel outside to the nearest trench for protection. As Specialist Fourth Class Henry Baldys and Sergeant Jimmie Carroll made their way to the team bunker, they came across the wounded Captain Jordan. Helping him to the bunker, Sergeant Carroll was wounded in the back by AK-47 fire. Inside the bunker they encountered Specialist Fourth Class Norman Batino and Specialist Five Roy Inman. They had made it there only minutes after sappers had tossed a satchel charge inside. Luckily, the heavily sandbagged and log-reinforced bunker was not seriously damaged.⁶

Specialists Batino and Baldys realized that Merkel was missing. Looking outside they saw that the unit orderly room and supply room were on fire. The two men crept outside and covered one another for thirty yards as they moved under fire to the trench. They found Merkel lying in the trench unconscious. Batino helped Baldys get Merkel into a fireman's carry. Then Baldys, covered by Batino, carried Merkel back to the bunker while the attack raged about them. Just as they got inside the team bunker, a tremendous explosion rocked the compound. Looking out through the dust and debris, the men saw that the radio antenna had been knocked down.⁷

The sappers had succeeded with their main target, but their mission was not complete. They began throwing satchel charges into the sandbagged radio modules that were the core of the transmitter system. While the PSYOPers defended themselves with small arms fire from their bunker, the ARVN unit responsible for perimeter security broke inside the compound to counterattack and hunt down the sappers. By 0330 AM, it was quiet—the VC had been dispersed. The Communists lost a half dozen sappers and the Americans had three wounded, one seriously.⁸

The cost of the VC attack cannot just be measured in damaged and destroyed equipment. The U.S. Army suffered three wounded. All the wounded were evacuated to the hospital at Pleiku Airbase. Merkel died of his extensive wounds shortly after arrival.

The next morning, Radio Hanoi bragged about the successful attack against "The Voice" radio station. MACV

was determined to get the station back on the air as soon as possible. The 7th PSYOP Group in Okinawa quickly responded by shipping a replacement antenna and radio modules to Vietnam. Civilian contractors were flown in from the United States to set up the radio antenna. With all of the radio modules replaced and the antenna up, "The Voice" was back on the air ten days after the 24 March attack.⁹

First Lieutenant Michal A. Merkel, a 1965 Electrical Engineering graduate of Purdue University, was awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, National Defense Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, and National Order of Vietnam, Fifth Class. His wife Patricia, daughter Terri, parents, and brother David survived him. Merkel's Bronze Star Medal citation captures his contribution to the American effort during the Vietnam War:



Second Lieutenant Michal Merkel at graduation from Signal Officer Basic Course in 1967. A 1965 Electrical Engineering graduate of Purdue University, he received his commission through the ROTC program.

... Of primary significance . . . was Lieutenant Merkel's brilliant work in the establishment of a 50,000 watt radio transmitting station at Pleiku, Republic of Vietnam. As a direct result of his technical expertise and relentless dedication to duty, he overcame numerous technical difficulties and complications to insure rapid construction of the station. Despite a shortage of trained administrative and maintenance personnel, Lieutenant Merkel completed the arduous and extraordinarily difficult construction of the transmitter in minimum time. First Lieutenant Merkel's professional competence and achievements were in keeping with the highest traditions

of the United States Army and reflected great credit upon himself and the military service.¹⁰

During 2007, the 4th PSYOP Group will dedicate the new Media Operations Complex in memory of First Lieutenant Michal A. Merkel. The proposed memorialization plaque reads "1LT Merkel made the ultimate sacrifice for his nation and the people of the Republic of Vietnam. His sacrifice will serve to inspire all PSYOP dissemination soldiers, past, present, and future as to the significance and danger of their mission." ♠

This article would have not been possible without the contributions of Mr. Douglas Elwell, 3rd PSYOP Battalion, Major Nicholas Kinkead, USASOC G-8, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Dulaney, Mr. Bill Hamby, Mrs. Terri Goodrich, and Mr. David Merkel.

Endnotes

- 1 The technical nomenclature for the radio station is the AN/TRT-22, 50kW AM Radio Broadcast System, and AN/TRR-18, Receiver System.
- 2 Douglas P. Elwell, e-mail to Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones Jr., 9 August 2006, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 3 Dr. William W. Forgey, e-mail to Major Nicholas Kinkead, 6 October 2005, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 4 Herbert A. Friedman, "Vietnam Order of Battle for Psychological Operations," 18 January 2006, <http://www.psywarrior.com/VietnamOBPSYOP>; David Sage, "VC Attack Pleiku Radio Station," *Credibilis*, Volume III, Number 4, April 1968, 1, 4.
- 5 Sage, "VC Attack Pleiku Radio Station," 1, 4.
- 6 Sage, "VC Attack Pleiku Radio Station," 4.
- 7 Sage, "VC Attack Pleiku Radio Station," 4.
- 8 Dr. William W. Forgey, e-mail to Major Nicholas Kinkead, 6 October 2005, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 9 Dr. William W. Forgey, e-mail to Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones Jr., 7 September 2006, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Bill Hamby, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones, Jr., 26 September 2006, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 10 Department of the Army, Bronze Star Medal citation for 1st Lieutenant Michal A. Merkel, 9 April 1968, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

Location of the Media Operations Complex, Smoke Bomb Hill, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



The USASOC Media Operations Complex at Fort Bragg.



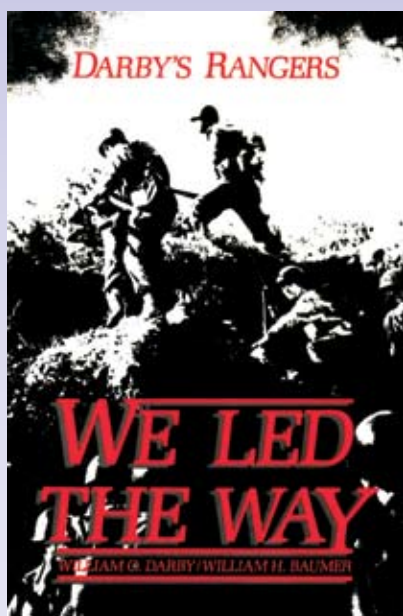
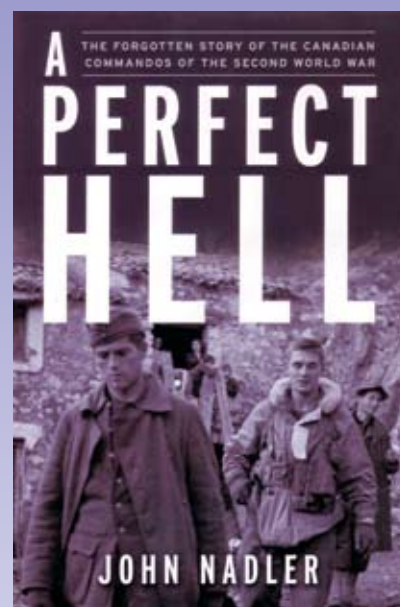
Books

in the Field

“Books in the Field” provides short descriptions of books related to subjects covered in the current issue of *Veritas*. Readers are encouraged to use these recommendations as a starting point for individual study on topics related to Army Special Operations history.

John Nadler, *A Perfect Hell: The Forgotten Story of the Canadian Commandos of the Second World War* (Scarborough, Ontario: Doubleday Books, 2005)

Told from the perspective of the Canadian members of the First Special Service Force, Canadian journalist John Nadler uses recent interviews with surviving Force members to recount the story of this unique Canadian-American unit. This book covers the entire existence of the Force, from the unit’s organization in Helena, Montana, in June 1942, until the Force is disbanded at Villeneuve-Loubet, France, in December 1944. It closely follows several Forcemen and is a well-written account of personal wartime experiences.

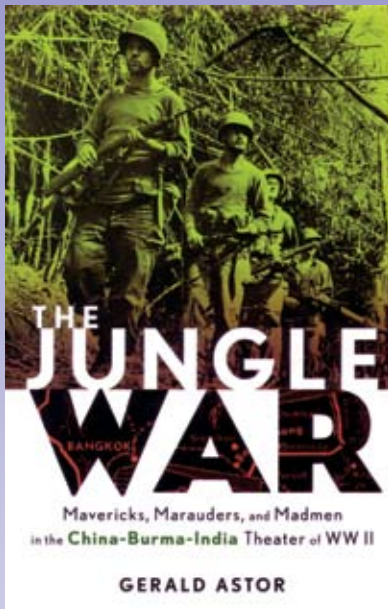
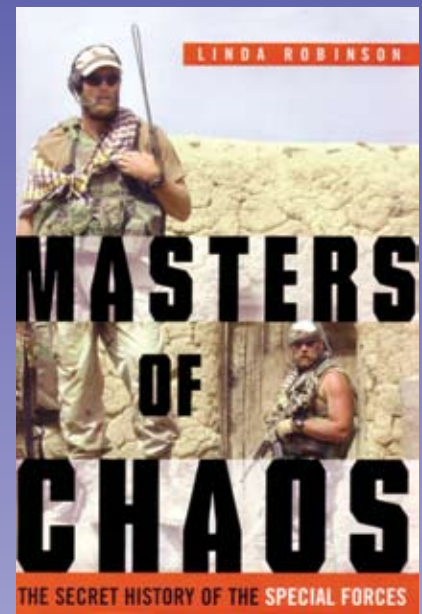


William O. Darby and William H. Baumer, *Darby's Rangers: We Led the Way* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1980)

Few units are as closely associated with a single individual as the World War II Rangers are with William O. Darby. Darby’s memoir recounts the initial organization and training of the 1st Ranger Battalion in Northern Ireland and follows the unit through combat operations in North Africa, Sicily, and on to Italy. Following the disaster at Cisterna, near Anzio, in January 1944, the Rangers are forced to rebuild the two battalions decimated in the attack. Darby is subsequently sent to command the 179th Infantry Regiment in the 45th Division. He died from a shell fragment on 30 April 1945 while serving as assistant division commander of the 10th Mountain Division. The book was dictated several months before his death in World War II to his West Point classmate William H. Baumer.

Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004)

Veteran *U.S. News & World Report* journalist Linda Robinson recounts the experiences of the Special Forces soldiers engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. The book provides a history of Special Forces from their earliest days at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1952, through the exploits of the teams deployed in the Global War on Terrorism. Based on first-hand accounts and extensive interviews, it covers the operations of modern-day Special Forces soldiers.



Gerald Astor, *The Jungle War: Mavericks, Marauders, and Madmen in the China-Burma-India Theater of World War II* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004)

The China-Burma-India Theater of World War II is often called the “Forgotten Front” in the war. The complexities of the politics and the personalities, the immense logistics difficulties, and the horrors of combat in the disease-ridden jungle are showcased in Gerald Astor’s book. Special operations units such as Detachment 101, Merrill’s Marauders, and the MARS Task Force were an integral part of the campaign. A good one-volume history of the third theater of World War II.

Other Recommended Books on Topics Covered in this Issue:

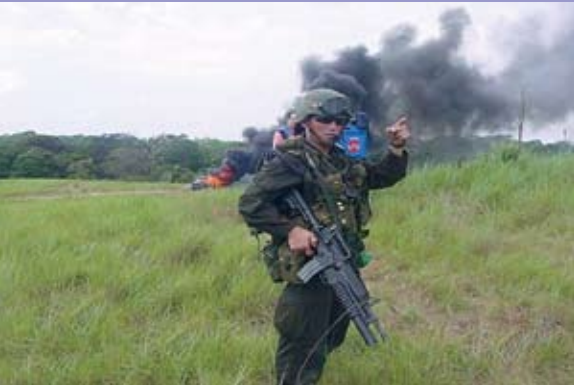
- ♣ Robert W. Black, *Rangers in World War II* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992)
- ♣ Cornelius Ryan, *The Last Battle: The Classic History of the Battle of Berlin* (New York: Simon & Schuster; 1995) (reprint edition)
- ♣ William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America’s Most Successful Guerilla Force* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1963)
- ♣ David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997)

In the Next Issue of Veritas

The Colombian Military in Korea, 1950–1954

by Charles H. Briscoe

Colombia was the only Latin American nation to support the U.S.-led multinational campaign in Korea at sea and on land. The Battle for Old Baldy against the Chinese, 23–24 March 1953, was the toughest engagement for the Colombians—153 were killed or wounded in twenty-four hours. The Korean War experience led to a transformation of the officers corps and reinforced the Colombian alliance with the United States against world communism.



Training the “Junglas”—the 7th Special Forces Group and the Colombian National Police

by Kenneth Finlayson

The Colombian National Police are a part of the country’s Ministry of Defense. Within the National Police, the Junglas are an elite reconnaissance and strike force in the battle against the guerrillas and narco-terrorists of Colombia. Members of the 7th Special Forces Group from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, regularly train the Junglas at their base in Espinal, Colombia.

Lancero: “The” Most-Respected Latin American Ranger Course

by Charles H. Briscoe

The Colombian *Lancero* school was organized in 1956 by Captain Ralph Puckett, the former Eighth U.S. Army Ranger Company commander. The *Lancero* school is considered to be the best Ranger training in Latin America and the *Lancero* badge [a takeoff on the U.S. Army CIB] is a mark of distinction worn proudly by military leaders throughout the region. While the school produces *Lancero*-qualified personnel much like the U.S. Army Ranger School, *Lancero* companies have been formed to provide reconnaissance (“the eyes and ears”) for the Colombian Army divisions in the ongoing Narco-Terrorist war.



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